The Governor

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STANGELAND

THE GOVERNOR

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE DANGEROUS AGE: Letters and Fragments from a Woman's Diary.

ELSIE LINDTNER

THE GOVERNOR

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH

BY

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THE GOVERNOR

Kajus Pleyelt Poss van Ruyter, known as "van Devil," lord of Brakkevold and Seven-Isles, always rose from his bed and went out into the fresh air before the morning dew had fallen. He did not follow the level and trodden paths, but preferred the secret ways where he might chance upon something that had been hidden, forgotten, or left unnoticed. He liked to creep along the bottoms of ditches, or in the shadow of thorn-hedges, and between the high boundary-dykes of the fields, so that he might come upon his work-people from the rear.

And then they tasted his dog-whip.

It was said that the cord was always sticky with blood, so furiously did he apply it, also that, when he laid it aside upon the settle by the

stove, the dogs would lick it to still the pangs of their unsatisfied hunger.

Never a day passed without a visit to the brick-kiln.

It was well-nigh a necessity of his existence to tread fast and deep into the slimy clay floor so that the lumps splashed up over his jerkin, and to know that every foot's-breadth of soil would be made into smooth red bricks that, piled together, would bring him heavy silver and new lands.

His talent for commerce came to him from Holland, and had been sucked in with his mother's milk.

The steep, irregular hillocks along the bay, where formerly goats and geese had grazed, he cultivated to raise crops. Wherever the horses, attached to the heavy plough, could find no footing he harnessed his peasants to it in their place —and this on holidays that they might not be interrupted in their daily work.

The little flesh that the peasants ate they had to cut from the carcasses of fallen cattle, dead of disease. With these the butcher could do no

business. Fish which, fresh, dried, or salted, formed their staple food, were to be caught in shoals in the bay and along the strand. There was no sick man so wretched but that he was counted able to handle eel-spear, whiting-net, or pike-line.

Twice a year van Devil sent his work-people to the mouth of the fjord to dam up the salt water. Strict attention was paid that the beach might be scraped clean, and the salt thus obtained was sold to great advantage.

The lord of Seven-Isles had a peculiar method of breeding.

He obliged his peasants to rear puppies—caring nothing for the fact that it was strictly forbidden by law to keep many dogs. On the other hand the regulation that ordered them to be hamstrung in the fore-legs suited him very well indeed—the beasts did not run away so easily.

The peasants themselves must see to it that the front teeth of these dogs were broken off in good time that they might not injure sheep and cattle; if they failed to do this van Devil's wrath fell upon them. If the coats were good and long

the animals were caught and shorn, and the women had to weave and spin the stiff hair into clothes for themselves and the men. These kept them warm.

Rotten apples and turnips, baked in the ashes, formed the only sustenance that the peasants were able to give the dogs, and thus the wretched curs were accustomed to keep themselves alive with stinking carrion and putrid fish.

Refractory serfs were set to dig tree-stumps out of the forest-swamps—only the bailiff and the sinners themselves could realize the severity of this punishment. Often when the hole yawned as deep as a man's height and the roots had to be worked out of the evil-smelling mud, one by one, the men must be yoked together, like oxen, to drag them out. The harder they pulled the deeper they sank into the bog, often up to their waists before the roots gave way.

These were then stacked up in heaps before the brick-kiln to dry in the sun before they could be used for heating the furnace. Van Devil kept an account of every brick, and himself turned over the heaps of ashes to look for half-charred

stumps which the peasants might have stolen. Women and children and bent old men, crippled with gout, looked after the baking, smoothing and stacking of the bricks; the shaping was done by capable, matured men.

One day a little before sunset, van Devil went out to measure the height of the corn. As he did so a smell of fox came to his nostrils and the dogs began to be uneasy. But it was only a girl who had wrapped fox and marten skins about her smooth, brown body. She had her arms full of the foamy white wild-flowers from the stems of which the herds cut flutes. She gave him no word of greeting, and did not make way for him in the narrow path along the ditch—but shoved him so brusquely aside that it was he who must spring into the thistle-scrub. He slashed at her angrily with his whip, but she caught the cord with her teeth and whirled around so quickly that the handle slipped out of his grasp.

Laughing, she stepped in front of him and flung the whip into the field. Across his breast, under the open vest, lay four chains cunningly fashioned out of gold pieces and wrought plates,

and welded together in the middle. She tried, coaxingly, to pull it from him, but at that he seized her by the arms and legs and threw her, like a calf, across his shoulder. She kicked him furiously and bit into his ear.

Despite his burden he puffed out his chest. Her laughter tickled him, rough and heavy as he otherwise was, and now he thought with satisfaction of his seigneurial rights. So gaily did he carry the girl up the winding stair to the castle that she grazed her bare foot against the stone wall and screamed. High up he carried his captive to the battlement which the sun was just sweeping with its crimson rays.

"What is thy name?"

"Kaina!" she shouted into his ear, and he squeezed her neck with his strong hand until she promised to be as gentle as the white lambs on the slope under the castle. But she might also play and spring about like the lambs until the sun set. He gave her food and plenty of drink, but so long as an attendant was in their presence he hid her face with his great hand—so vastly did she please him.

Then he led her to his bed-chamber. It was empty, it was large, its walls were dark. Van Devil feared the night, and therefore he had had a bed made for himself surrounded by iron rails as high as a man, and the spikes of which were sharp as lances. To enter it one must mount three steps and pass through a wide door fastened from within by bolts.

In addition to this howling dogs kept guard.

She did not wish to creep into this prison; they quarrelled fiercely over the question. He was the stronger, and he pulled her in with him onto the brown bearskin.

On the following morning she was as if transformed, and would fain have remained constantly at his side; but for that he had no relish.

He ordered one of his men, Tyge Baden, to take her on horseback and ride, with spurs, until the sun stood right over his head; then he was to set the girl down, be it in marsh or field, and to ride home alone.

Tyge was faithful and did as he was commanded, though the girl tried to cajole him.

Months later, when the snow lay piled up under the castle walls, she returned to Seven-Isles.

Van Devil heard, from his tower-room, footsteps on the winding stair, which appeared to him strange; for he could not guess whom it might be, seeing that no one dared to disturb him when, with red chalk and a heated brain, he made out his accounts. On all the beams of the ceiling the sun and the moon and the course of the stars were painted and carved, but with a bold hand he reached up and wrote, in red chalk, between the signs of the heavens, the name of his debtor or the sum of silver collected.

Now he sprang to the door in the belief that he was about to catch a thief. But she who came slowly towards him came with a humble prayer, and when he saw how heavily she carried herself and counted the months that had passed, he grew strangely soft-hearted.

For never before had he given life to another being.

He himself led her to the single arm-chair under the bell. The latter hung and rusted; never yet had he needed to summon help by its

aid. But should it fall from its place it might cause the death of a man. Van Devil saw, with secret satisfaction, how thickly the cobwebs hung about the tongue, binding it to the metal walls. The bell had been dug out of the bog of Seven-Isles, still it belonged to the church, and from time to time he had been commanded to give it up—but he would not let it go, and out of revenge evil tongues had prophesied that, should the bell sound once more in Seven-Isles, van Devil would die a miserable death.

He listened gently to the girl's complaint. Two chests filled with treasure stood open, and her eyes glittered as she looked from the one to the other.

She told of the were-wolf that, despite the darkness of the winter day, had followed her over moor and swamp, across the hills and through the river-valleys. Wherever she wandered seeking plants whose roots might give form, strength and living soul to the child, came the were-wolf, and scratched with its claws in the earth. With a thousand crosses and exorcisms she kept it off, but it came ever again, ever

pursuing her. It wished to tear her in pieces and eat the heart of the unborn child. But now the lord of her body must guard her from the monster that she might bear her child in peace.

Van Devil took her in his arms as carefully as if she were lady of Seven-Isles, and carried her into the stone chamber, where he called his men and bade them prepare a bath for her. There were no women-folk at Seven-Isles to perform a woman's duties.

It was only when the room was gray with steam and the damp mounted up under his breeches that he thought of going to shut his treasure-chests; but as the woman feared to remain alone and saw in every corner the blood-thirsty glare of the were-wolf, he soon returned and kept watch with her the whole night through.

Towards morning she bore the boy, and begged that he might be named Runow. So long as she was suckling him she remained at Seven-Isles, but she was restless and uneasy. She would not let the child out of her sight, but car-

ried it everywhere, wound in a red shawl and bound to her waist.

When van Devil was absent she tried long and vainly to break, with her back, the door of the tower-chamber. He never took her into it with him, for he had read in her eyes that the one sight of the treasure-chests had filled her with morbid greed. She could not bear the hungry howling of the many dogs, and to please her he fastened them with chains at the foot of the tower, and gave them plenty to eat.

In the days of spring she sought the fruit-garden, which was cultivated and hedged in with care and industry, as van Devil required it to be. And she soon displayed such knowledge of the plants that she was of the greatest help to the gardener. If, whilst she worked with knife and props, it chanced that a bird rose over her head into the air she would throw herself screaming on the ground; but soon she accustomed her throat to imitate all the bird-notes.

Van Devil saw well enough that she was tired of him, and that she cast stolen, tender glances at his men; but he knew that not one of them

would dare to touch her, no matter how wisely she might charm. It became his bitter pleasure to tease and torment her. Through the child he held her in fetters.

One day he took a chill and lay in fever with leeches on his breast and loins. Then the woman was kind and helpful. The touch of her soft hands and the fleeting smile on her face did him good. She prepared hot potions for him from thyme and camomile-flowers and the juice of young carnation-shoots, and gave them to him to drink. The heat oppressed him, and he tore down the chains of the bed and threw them onto the floor. As he did so he let fall the key of the tower-chamber. Shortly after she left the room carrying the boy with her in a shawl slung on her back. She remained away a long time. Suddenly he remembered that the key had fallen to the ground—and now it was gone. He sprang up, the leeches dangling from his body—the key was not there. Then he seized his sharp hunting-knife and crept up the stairs to the tower. The door stood open. She was within,

bending over the chests and stuffing her head-kerchief with jewelry and coins.

Van Devil did not pause to reflect; she found no time to cry out. He thrust the knife into her back from behind. She fell forward, and the child rolled out of the shawl into the gold. Van Devil laughed, and pushed him carefully aside whilst he counted his treasure thrice over. A bracelet that he had given the woman on the morning after Runow's birth he tore off the body. Then he called for Tyge Baden, and, with his help, loosened the flags of the floor the length of a man and three feet wide. They dug out the clay till they came to the oak beams at a depth of four feet. Wrapped in its clothes, the body was then hidden away, the clay stamped down firmly and the flags once more set in place.

From that day forth the child was fed on goats' milk, ox-blood, and bread broken up in thin ale; on these he throve.

In the following year van Devil brought him a play-fellow. It was said that he had set his dog at a pregnant woman who was stealing stumps from the brick-kiln. As he saw that it

had her by the throat he was smitten with remorse and tried to whistle it off. But it was too late. He was obliged to pull away the animal by force. She was not quite dead, but neither was she quite alive—she bore her child at once just as her eyeballs burst.

He stood there in the midst of the ash-heap. It was towards evening. Wet mists wrapped him round. The dog set up a mournful howl. A strange feeling impelled him to stab it dead, then he skinned it, wrapped the child in its hide, and carried it home to Runow's bed.

The boy was named Jacob.

By day the two children were always together. Between them there was only this difference: that Runow was considered as the legitimate son of van Ruyter and would one day inherit his goods and lord it over Brakkevold and Seven-Isles, whilst Jacob was only permitted, by a gracious whim, to live in his neighbourhood.

At night the boundary-line was deeply drawn. For then Jacob must go down to the serfs and sleep amongst a lot of grim fellows whose jeers

and noise deafened his ears—but Runow was shut into the iron-railed bed with his father.

He would gladly have changed places, even though the sour smell and the thick darkness of the cellar were not agreeable, for he feared his father, feared the moonlight that, like a gigantic spider, span and span webs between the rails of the bed; feared the lean dogs that slavered round it, stretching out their tongues towards his face; feared the velvet of the hangings that looked like wet blood in the moonlight.

He was timid.

If he awoke at night and saw the heavy, hairy body of his father turn in sleep under the bear-skin he was terrified and crept aside against the railing. His mother haunted his dreams. Foolish talk had filled his imagination with visions of which he could not rid himself. It seemed to him that everywhere, in the smell of the dogs, in every other odour, he could detect the terrible stench from out the flooring of the tower-chamber high up above the bed.

He knew that his dear mother lay there, and that she had been called Kaina.

He could not even bear to see his father thrash the dogs. It made him tremble, and blenched his lips.

Preben Podewitz Lindenow and Mistress Merthe Bölle spent the early years of their married life in healthy love-making.

Twin-daughters were the first-fruits.

But as Mistress Merthe and her husband were one day hunting wild boars her horse stumbled over the roots of a tree, and in the fall her knee was injured so that, for a year and a day, she remained an invalid and obliged to keep her bed.

Master Preben visited her in friendly fashion every day that passed, but the sun warmed his skin, whilst she soon resembled a gray shadow. The talk between them grew into dispute. When he left the women's quarters he would breathe deeply and sigh with relief. The black wound on her knee from which matter flowed was horrible to him.

Then the report came to Mistress Merthe's ears that her beloved spouse was running after all sorts of lasses, and holding orgies with light

women about the country-side. Poor Mistress Merthe shut the door in his face and the smile that had formerly played about her lips now dug in both her cheeks a bitter furrow.

The women's quarters looked onto the narrow inner rose-garden which had been made high up on the ramparts. In front of her room she caused a hanging arbour to be built, with balcony, anteroom and stairs. They carried her out there in fair weather and she rested amongst her cushions in the perfume of marjoram and sweet blue lavender and climbing roses. There she lay and listened to the hum of the bees and the sighing of the limes—and to the thunder of hoofs when Master Preben rode over the drawbridge.

And meanwhile her two maidens sang to her and told her stories.

One evening it pleased her to be carried down to the green lawn and to remain there until sunset. Master Preben had not yet returned home. The dew dripped from skin and hair, the nightwind dried it again. Still Master Preben had not yet ridden in over the drawbridge, and still Mistress Merthe lay and listened. When her

maidens would have carried her indoors she was sleeping the gentle sleep of the dead.

But Master Preben kneeled beside her corpse and would not leave the chamber, and he wept like a woman, refusing food until her burial was over.

The children, Hilleborg and Brigitte, had at this time scarcely completed their sixth year. Their father had occupied himself but little with them, their mother still less. No wonder, then, that they wandered about the highway and country lanes with coarse words and evil speech on their tongues, pitifully small though they were.

One fine, fresh morning a couple of years later, as the pair wallowed about in the swamp where the burial-ground of the ancient manor had once lain, Hilleborg found a skull with long teeth and tufts of hair upon the cranium. She seized it by this hair and swung it round like a cart-wheel until her arm ached and she let it fall to the ground. Brigitte picked it up, and they played ball with it until the skull flew to pieces, and loosened teeth and yellow dust flew about their ears.

Then they caught the sounds of a loud dispute, and hid themselves in the rushes to listen.

"And I will not suffer that you accuse me of theft. So truly as there is a God in heaven I will run away from the manor this instant. No honest woman need listen to your filthy speeches. To brand a maid as a thief because she honourably and piously wears a golden breast-kerchief, a present from her blessed mistress—God give her a joyous resurrection from the grave! And if I needs must leave here on my bare knees I will not remain another hour. No one who would grant me the charity of a drink of cold water would expect me to herd with such cursed cattle as you!"

"Nay, nay, Jytte Malene; I did not mean that —by God! you have misunderstood my words."

"You speak the name of God lightly! Rather call on that of the devil. But in my last prayer I will beg God not to let you leave the world until you have shriven yourself of the sin that you would lay upon my shoulders."

"Jytte Malene, Jytte Malene—you know well how kind and true a friend I am to you. You

stood beside the blessed Mistress Merthe on her death-bed and you saw with what bitter grief I suffered for my sins. In her name and for the sake of my innocent children I beg you not to quit the manor!"

"Blessed Mistress Merthe is safe in the grave from your foul talk. Satan so has hold of you that you respect nothing more and do not hesitate to accuse a defenceless woman—fie, fie, devil!"

"Jytte Malene — noble-hearted maid, you would not abandon me and my little children!"—

His voice failed him as the woman began once more.

The pair left the path, but for a long while after the children sat still and brooded over what they had heard. Then Hilleborg threw back her head. "May she go to death and the devil! the damned light o' love. By God, one can smell her long before one sees her she so drenches herself with fennel-water to make herself more attractive! We can put on our stockings without the huzzy, I fancy!"

Brigitte, who seldom spoke many words at a time, added softly, "No woman has ever combed the hair of Runow at Seven-Isles."

"Runow," repeated Hilleborg, and suddenly she turned a fierce look upon Brigitte, who dropped her eyes and reddened. Hilleborg stooped and picked up the broken jaw-bone, and the sisters tripped away through the yellow-green corn to the river below.

When they were about ten years of age Runow and Jacob were given a tutor, Simen Brockmann, who, in addition to the usual lore of children, was to stuff them with Latin, the art of reckoning, and whatever else boys of especially lofty birth might require.

Although Simen was the son of a wealthy councillor of Ribe, had studied at foreign universities and held the title of Magister*, he received in wages only his food and drink, and an empty chamber without firing.

Four long years Simen had already lived like an owl amongst crows, without a friend in whom he might confide. He had returned to Ribe just as his old nurse, Sidsel Pollek, stood on trial, accused of exorcism and of other witchcraft. For countless years the folk had sought her aid for internal injuries, hot and cold fevers, broken legs and pains in the limbs, which she cured with charms and with herb-broths. This was now

*Master of Arts.—tr.

laid to her charge, and a mass of evidence was brought forward against her.

For it invariably happens that gossips and idlers gladly help to push on the heavy cart. Of true and sworn witnesses there were none. Strongest of all the evidence against her were the two dead fingers that she wore crossed on her bare breast. For, as Sören, the thief who hung on the gallows, had been deprived of two fingers of his right hand, the judge declared that Sidsel had stolen them for her witch's magic.

She allowed herself to be laid on the rack till her limbs cracked, but even then she swore by the all-seeing Eye of God that she had twisted the fingers from the hand of her dead daughter, and laid them on her breast to guard herself from wasting of the bones and other maladies. She begged that her daughter might be disinterred, but this was more easily said than done, as the graveyard was a wilderness of nettles, weeds and holes, where dogs and pigs rooted.

Simen vainly exercised his Latin and his jurisprudence, also he swore to vouch for her innocence with body and soul.

As all this was useless, he himself undertook the hangman's task, and, quite alone, dug in the graveyard twenty ells west and twenty ells north where Sidsel believed that her daughter lay. And he found her, too, recognizing her by a long tooth and two missing fingers.

But executioner and witnesses were as if wrapped in ass-skins nine times thick into which nothing could penetrate, and they would not be convinced. Therefore, Sidsel was burned, but as a special favour they bound a sack of powder under her back that the fire might finish her quickly.

Since then Simen had been avoided by his family and looked at askance by the burghers of Ribe. It went so far that his name was called from the pulpit, and he was condemned by the priest to the devil and eternal damnation.

To begin with, he laughed, and said that the ban would not harm him if the fist but let him be. But he soon came to feel that the ban of the church pressed more heavily than a load of stones, and hurt him more than a flogging. At length he was accused of complicity and had to

steal out of the town-gate by night to escape the hangman and the gallows.

In Viborg he learned that Kajus Ruyter of Seven-Isles wanted a tutor. He presented himself and accepted the miserly conditions offered him.

Simen won the children's hearts after his own fashion. He told them more than he taught them, and much that he had seen out in the world awakened their interest. The days passed in reading, play, and fencing, in which Jacob was especially keen despite his crooked, stooping figure.

He loved, too, to deck himself in gay-coloured rags. He hung on Runow's horse like the tassel on a peaked cap.

Of an evening, when they knew that van Devil was hidden in his bed, they would seek the armoury with Simen. The moonlight shimmered on the dark-green window-panes. From the chimney came great bats that flapped blindly here and there under the rafters of the ceiling. Words echoed from wall to wall and would not die away. Simen would seat himself on a worm-

eaten stool, the children close beside him, whilst he told them tales. Jacob's mind was the quicker, Runow's the more retentive.

In winter time the boys themselves would go down to the courtyard to fetch wood. As, however, van Devil would not allow sweet-smelling juniper and wall-nut to be thus wasted, but only turf and tree-roots from the brick-kiln, they helped themselves as well as they could by mixing with their fuel sage and lavender. Runow, who loved a sweet-scented fire or rich and spicy food, would then lie before the hearth and sink into a dream over Simen's wise talk. Sometimes it would happen that both lads fell asleep, and then Simen would spread a skin over them before he went into his own chamber.

There was little variety in the run of time at Seven-Isles. What happened one day would also happen on the same day in the year following. Tidings of the death of one, of the feud of another, of discord and strife in the country, seldom reached Seven-Isles, and the little that did reach it van Devil kept to himself, knowing how to hold his tongue in his cheek.

Runow grew up lean in the flanks and supple as a weazel. He cared neither for wine nor beer, and could not bear the sight of blood. His voice was soft and low-pitched.

Often his heart would be heavy and dull as if after a debauch, and it was only lightened when he played upon his little lute and sang songs to its accompaniment that rhymed of themselves. If he knew himself to be unobserved he sang nothing but "Brigitte Lindenow, Brigitte Lindenow"; but the name formed for him a hundred sweet little verses.

Around Lünegaard as far as the eye could reach stretched out the great marsh girdled by oak-woods and hills covered with heather. Deep and safe it lay there, so sheltered by the woods that no rainy year could spoil its rich industry of peat-cutting. Every day many dozens of peat-cutters were sent out southwards, and no one could pass along the high-road without meeting the Lünegaard oxen with their piled-up loads. And in spite of this the piles did not diminish nor the peat fail.

Gold lay here in tons, far more than the richest clay-bed could produce. And although Preben might gamble and carouse and leave things to take care of themselves, the work continued steady and sure as the march of the sun round the earth. What folly squandered, luck brought in again.

Stable-lads and serfs who were always ready enough to lend themselves to mischief were also

ready to give their arms and their backs to the work. And as they worked they sang.

It was said that Preben Lindenow measured his silver in drinking-cups an ell in height, and kept it in open chambers, and that his little girls filled their caps with it to toss into the moat.

And the woods of Lünegaard held thousands of oaks as thick as walls that were sought after and purchased all over the land. Posts and beams from Lünegaard with the red brand-marks supported the walls of fortress and castle for miles around.

And still the woods grew no thinner. There were always acorns enough for Lünegaard's mighty herd of swine.

Van Devil was envious of the great marsh and the surrounding oak-woods. He brooded over them by day and he brooded over them by night, and willingly would he have exchanged Runow for the Lünegaard property, though Runow was his dearest treasure.

By the hour together he would stand and slash with his whip at the smooth marsh-water that re-

flected his envious face; but he could not help brooding.

One morning he encountered the little Lindenows seated in a milk-cart filled with red cushions that hung down over the wheels. Runow and Jacob were harnessed to it. Hilleborg swung the whip over them: Brigitte lay at full length staring at the sun.

And then a solution of the problem occurred to van Devil. He need only wait until Runow had attained maturity. For even through darkness and mist it was clearly to be seen that the twins were most graciously disposed towards him.

Apparently it was especially Hilleborg, who so often rode up to the castle late in the evening on an unbroken horse, and awoke the sleeping servants with her loud laughter. Her great, shining eyes hung constantly on Runow, but about her lips played defiance, wilfulness and coaxing. Every one must obey her—the brothers, Simen, aye, even van Devil himself—when she commanded an owl-hunt or a horse-race. And as time went on she grew worse. As if she were

mistress of the house she ordered wax candles, torches, and bright fires to be lit in the hay-loft and in every corner of the tower, and however bitterly van Devil might resent this mad extravagance he did not express his thoughts either in word or look.

Even when she had a dusty barrel of sweet wine rolled into the courtyard, herself drew out the plug with her hunting-knife, drank out of the hollow of her hand and offered the same to the grooms—even then he kept silence.

With severity a man could bridle a woman's caprice and a woman's temper.

Hilleborg wore no cap as the good old rule ordained. Her long, marten-soft hair flowed freely over her back, but weeks might pass in which the ivory comb that lay in a corner of the hunting-bag did not touch it. Runow liked to let his fingers glide through it and cleanse it from the dust of the road and flakes of wool. As he did so he greedily drank in the fresh, mossy perfume. But if he chanced to touch her arm or her cheek, covered with silvery down like that on the beech-buds, his own flesh shivered and a warm thrill

crept down his spine. Twice, as she suddenly turned and bit into his lip with her teeth, disgust rendered him speechless—as, however, she threw up her head and ran away in anger, he pursued her and called her back. He was happy and content when she came, and she could talk of many things, but when she was absent he thought more of the food that he ate.

Brigitte came seldom to Seven-Isles, and then she occupied herself mostly with Jacob and Simen, with Runow she was very shy. She would sit with quiet dignity upon the bench and listen to van Devil's heavy speech; but her eyes and ears were for Runow only.

The plague broke out over the land. Rumour brought it near and terror increased it. Prayers were offered and sung in Danish and in Latin; but the swine fell dead in the lanes and the stench of carrion hung about the springs and crept into every house. Infection overtook the busy folk.

Those who, with bared heads, gazed defiantly up at the sun and kept the yearly holidays as usual, and those who covered themselves and crept into dark corners, were alike seized by the pestilence.

The mice in the wainscoting cried pitifully when their bellies festered; but the rats in the beams of the walls and in the bulwarks of the fjord were as if possessed, rushed into the open churches, and attacked pious folk with their teeth.

The swollen corpses of these dead rats lay over the church-floors; under the flags were the blue bodies of the people. For all decency had long

since come to an end, and there was no time to lay them in nailed coffins in accordance with Christian precepts.

Shrill with horror rang the voices of the congregations, and the priests preached for the dead and the living until the Host fell from their hands and their faces stiffened.

The foul stench of funeral-pyres where witches burned crept about the sweating foreheads of the judges. The women were condemned on any evil evidence; but only their bodies became ashes—their souls, in league with the devil, flew through the air and spread further disease amongst the people.

Clear water was troubled with the corpses of dead fish. Mists, smelling of sulphur, hung over marl-pits and marshes. No drop of rain moistened the earth through the long months of summer despite the appeal of longing hearts. And the crops rotted in the fields.

Children and greybeards alike went wailing away from the houses in the hot, heavy air. The wind slept, the scorched trees were motionless. But the dismal groans of the people, rotting away

alive—these groans rang throughout the whole land. The breath of the plague drove away the singing-birds under the sky. Only the rats crept over the ground amongst those whose hearts still beat.

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The plague reached Seven-Isles also. But van Devil was strong. He had a pit dug and filled with slaked lime; in this there was room for many. When the pit should be filled there was lime enough for the rest. As he saw dead frogs in his springs he had salt thrown into them that none might drink to his undoing. Water was henceforth only to be drawn from the stream that ran into the great cistern in the courtyard.

With wise severity he shot down every dog upon his property. He reckoned sagely that dogs, which sniff at everything, would carry the plague with them.

But when he had done everything in his power he thought only of Runow, and quickly came to the determination to send his son away, and Simen with him. Simen was, at heart, a prudent man, and foreign customs would perhaps teach

Runow to be less tender and not to fear the sight of blood.

No one thought of Jacob. But every evening in his terror and the simplicity of his heart he sent up a prayer to the distant God of the Trinity, and another of equal length to the lord Satan, that Runow might be guarded from pestilence and infection. And now he begged to be sent away with him. The part of a servant would suit him well if only he might not be forgotten.

"Thou canst probably follow our track; we ride southward on horseback. If thou hast good legs thou wilt overtake us, else must thou remain an obedient son at Seven-Isles."

It was said in jest, but afterwards Runow regretted that he had not dared to go against his father's will and take Jacob with him. Soon, however, he consoled himself. He was not sorry that Jacob was to remain in the neighbourhood of Lünegaard. He himself had not taken leave of Brigitte—van Devil had sent him away in haste.

So the two rode southward towards the frontier of the kingdom. They drew halt in no tav-

ern, for the plague might be dwelling anywhere. As the sun set they bound their horses to an oak-tree and lay down in the dry grass beside the road.

But when morning came Jacob was sleeping at their side with wide-open, bloodshot eyes. His chest heaved, his feet bled. Runow awoke and saw him, and then Jacob began to cry out in his sleep. On his finger was a narrow gold ring with a green stone. Hilleborg had sent it to Runow as a parting gift. Jacob did not hesitate to hand it over. But he kept Brigitte's greeting for himself.

They continued on their way through Holstein in short, painful day-journeys. Their plan was to reach the University and there to acquire the knowledge which they most desired. Runow wished to study jurisprudence. It was not his intention to seek a position, but when Seven-Isles should be his he meant to administer justice to every one. He was unhappy when any one suffered injustice and he longed to help them. But the very smell of a criminal turned him sick.

In Utrecht there lived a near relative of Ru-

now's, Groener Pleyelt by name, and the University there was highly praised. In this city, therefore, they established themselves.

Jacob chose the study of medicine, and Simen remained with them and watched over them as well as he was able.

And the time passed.

It was a beautiful Sunday, six years later. Idle ships lay in the harbour. The beggars stumbled about with soup-pail and staff. High over the roofs of the houses the bells of the town chimed merrily. In the churches there was a musty smell like that of a poultry-yard—it came from the sable-trimmed robes of the ladies.

They prayed for prosperity at sea, for prosperity in the city, and that ill-minded enemies might be smitten with disease.

In the market-place by the cathedral strutted a single crowing cock, nothing else was in sight.

But in the deep, cool cellars sat the thick-bellied, red-cheeked burghers whose fathers had eaten rats under Alba. They now kept holiday with dice-throwing and refreshed themselves with Almighty God's pure grape-juice. If it chanced that curses and abuse were exchanged, and if there should be matter for fighting or even

for death-blows, it was but the ill results of idleness.

Hidden between houses and yards, sheltered from every cold wind, lay the garden of Groener Pleyelt, and in the garden walked his young only daughter, Cornelia. The weight of her golden hair bent back her head; she did not cease to hum and to imitate the notes of the happy birds in the sunshine. In the brown tan of the path were the countless tracks of her swift footprints.

One summer morning Cornelia had been carried out to Groener, who had just watched half the night over a sick tulip. On that same morning of her birth her mother had died. Since then she had spent all the days of summer in the garden. But in winter, when the bulbs were laid away in deep stone jars, she watched over them in the house, counted and arranged them, and allowed no one else to touch her father's treasures. Early in the spring, when wood-mould and dung were spread over the garden and fresh tan for the paths brought in loads from the tannery, Cornelia herself bored holes for the bulbs; she knew exactly each one's place, thrust the yel-

low ivory sticks into the earth, and polished the little silver shields on which stood the name of each bulb.

Just now the flowers shone in rich-coloured bloom. There were thick-petalled ones, looking as if they were carved out of leather, with swollen veins and wrinkled toad-skins, transparent ones like dragon-flies' wings with clear pores, or soft ones ringed like ostrich feathers or shining with glaze like Delft ware, speckled like birds' eggs—of all colours known on earth.

Cornelia picked worms and black-beetles from the flowers. She stood with dilated nostrils greedily breathing in their perfume. Butterflies fluttered around her, drunk with love—they settled themselves on her shining hair to rock themselves and rest.

In the middle of the path lay a little gold-brocaded cap that she had dropped as she chased her tame ermine. She let it lie where it had fallen, sure that Runow would rise from his bench and bring it to her. But Runow remained seated, obstinate and silent. The flowers irri-

tated his nose and his eyes like shrill trumpet-blasts.

He looked up at the sky that was free from wind and clouds; there was only quivering air, clear and quivering as silk. Like the silken kerchief that he had lately tied about Barbara's neck.

Barbara—

Heniche—

And Cornelia—

He turned Hilleborg's ring on his finger. The little green stone was gone. Perhaps Barbara had loosened it in envy, or perhaps it had fallen out. As he turned the ring all his thoughts wandered sadly to Brigitte, who had been silent for six summers. True, news reached him through the letters that van Devil wrote. They told him that the sisters were travelling about the country to visit their distinguished relatives and acquire the education that they sadly lacked. But van Devil wrote seldom and the sisters never.

Cornelia went up to him; "I found this stone in my chamber. Thou must have lost it out of thy ring last night!"

She threw her arms about his neck; "Runow, all the flowers that I touch burn so, why is that?"

All the bells became silent just then and they knew that it was noon. But Groener was already in the garden, and he had seen Runow and Cornelia stand embracing one another. He went towards them, deep concern visible in his face.

"Runow, hast thou considered that the close tie of kinship knits you two together? If harm has come to my child neither thou nor any one else can make good the mischief."

Runow cast down his eyes, but the girl cried into her father's face, "In spite of kinship, in spite of the laws of the church, I love Runow and he me!"

But Groener took Cornelia by the hand and led her out of the garden.

When the angelus rang and the city slept Groener's coach went rattling out of it, and he himself sat at home in his parlour and let his fingers glide through the shorn hair of his child.

Runow lay over the table with his hands to his ears. Cornelia had cried and wept the whole afternoon—now all was quiet again.

Simen sat beside him and talked to him soothingly, telling him that it was destiny and not ill-intention. But Runow shook his head. Simen knew nothing of the falsehood and the wild lust that dwelled within him. Not for one instant had he forgotten the kinship that stood between them.

And now—and now!

After the coach had returned once more to the city there was a knock on Groener's door.

"Believe me, blind and deaf I gave my body to love and my soul to deception. On my life and honour if I meant well to any being it was to Cornelia."

Groener interrupted him.

"Thanks, son, for thy words and their truth. I will believe that thou hadst meant to deal honourably by her. But as a thousand wax candles of an arm's thickness cannot suffice to banish darkness from the heavens, an evil deed is not undone by words. Thou knewest that so near kinsmen could not stand together before the altar. And now—should she remain at home she must blush before the flowers that she played

with as a sister. It will be silent here and empty —but time, which gives life, may grant the grace of a speedy death. I have no other hope. The doors have closed behind Cornelia and she is as dead, but no stranger must learn of her disgrace. And have a care, Runow! If thou in time shalt deal out justice and punish injustice thou must never forget what thou thyself hast done without thought of ill."

Runow would have declared honourably that one woman only, Brigitte, had his love. But cowardice tied his tongue.

Soon after he and Simen set out for Heidelberg where he was to complete his studies, and Jacob remained in Utrecht to perfect his knowledge of the medical science.

When Runow reached Seven-Isles once more Brigitte and Hilleborg had long since returned home. Van Devil was never idle, and during the years that had flown he had cultivated his friendship with Preben and his daughters. Aye, the bracelet that he had stripped from Runow's dead mother was worn by Hilleborg, and Brigitte had received a pearl ornament for her hair. But, unhappily, van Devil could not make up his mind which of the two sisters he must win. For should Runow choose Hilleborg only the treasures would matter to her and sweet words were thrown away, but if he should take her sister it was these latter that would be of most avail.

Long before Runow guessed it, van Devil had discovered that the goal of the two sisters was the same, and he resolved to wait until Runow should go wooing. It would certainly be better to know that the property need not be divided, but two would not pass for one mouth, and

were there justice in the world he would long survive his son, who was weak and thin.

Hilleborg followed Runow wherever he went and offered him her mouth and her eyes, but Brigitte was mostly with Jacob.

Jacob wooed her and she laughed at him.

"Thou shouldst know that I have other thoughts—but seek thy fortune with Hilleborg, she has as many chambers to her heart as a cow has stomachs—and still more. Lately she was on the point of running out of the country with that fool of a Volmer Blide, though she can carry him on her arm. Now it seems that she would be glad to run away with Runow—if he be not too heavy for her!"

Before the end of the year a marriage was arranged between Brigitte and Runow.

* * * * * * * *

The pipes sounded, the rafters of the castle shone, the bridal-bed was prepared with silken cushions woven with flowers, and the guests, strangers and acquaintances, sat at the banquet-table and the bridal-board.

Hilleborg rose from her cushions, went with

raised goblet to the bridegroom, and said, "Runow, my brother-in-law, we two must drink to the years that are to come and to those which are gone!"

He emptied the goblet till the sapphire at the bottom gleamed up at him like the eye of a serpent, and his eyes were soon glazed with intoxication, for he could not carry wine.

Many of the squires jumped upon the tablecloth and made speeches without sense or meaning, and maidens in silver brocade and silk sank their heads in the dishes so that their hair swam in them. They were drunk.

The music woke them again. Without ceremony or courtly etiquette each man seized a maid and swung her in a light-footed dance, goblet in hand.

Again Hilleborg went up to Runow and bade him dance with her the sister-dance, which ends with the kiss of kinship. Brigitte stood surrounded by torch-bearers, so dazzled by the red glow that she could distinguish nothing outside the circle. And as Hilleborg seized the tall goblet, filled it to the brim and drank to him, Runow

emptied it to the dregs. But then his speech became confused. The sapphire sprang out of the goblet and changed into the sparkling eyes of Hilleborg.

"Runow, my brother-in-law and now also my brother—once I sent thee a ring. Never hast thou thanked me for it!"

He stammered and tried to speak. It seemed to him that he could hear the voice of Groener's daughter saying, "This stone, Runow, I found in my chamber!"

Hilleborg drew him out into the rose-garden. Glow-worms shone in the dew-wet grass. Runow thought that they were stars and tried to pick them up to replace them in the sky—but they were extinguished in his hand.

"Runow, dost thou remember the day when thou combed my hair and kissed its perfume?"

"Like moss it smelled—like moss!"

"Sit down beside me, brother-in-law."

He seated himself on the stone bench, Hilleborg bent over him, loosened her hair and let it fall over his face.

"Canst breathe its perfume now?"

She covered his mouth with her lips—no words were exchanged. But the time passed and they remained away so long that Brigitte looked uneasily about the hall.

They entered by the same door. Hilleborg stepped lightly and composedly over to Brigitte, kissed her ear and whispered to her what had happened.

The bride's cry stayed the drunken guests. Silence fell along the walls. The musicians ceased playing and the dancers stopped. But Runow went slowly through the hall to where Hilleborg stood, seized her wrists, forced her to her knees, and hurled her on the floor that was soiled with many feet. Then he went up to Brigitte, who still held her hand pressed to her heart. He tried to meet her eyes, but could not raise his own to her.

All was silent, still as death, as step by step, Runow made his way out of the hall.

Thus he was divided from Brigitte.

There was one who was not at the wedding-feast although bidden and entreated.

The yellow jaundice had entered into van Devil's blood and he must needs keep his bed. He lay in a heavy sweat and raged in fever, cursing Satan in his heaven and the angels in the fiery ovens of hell. The fiercer grew his anger the wilder grew his talk, the fever seemed to have burned all understanding out of his brain.

Across the bed, a heavy load on his belly, stood the casket of commercial letters and documents. On the lid of the casket he had drawn up the one letter after the other addressed to his Royal Highness; but these seven-times sealed letters, despite his strictest commands, were not despatched, but lay heaped up in the ante-chamber.

One after another the servants of Seven-Isles crept upstairs and listened at the door as it grew dark, then kneeled down simply and implored the gracious and well-born lord Satan to take

van Devil's soul to himself as quickly as possible. The sick man knew nothing of this, and he called the folk to his bedside—in a wide circle around his treasure-chest—and bade them fold their hands and pray for the recovery of his body. The yellow jaundice was in his blood and neither the wise Iver nor Doctor Jacob knew what to do for him. The cause was no physical one, neither accident nor over-eating had sent the jaundice to his veins, but the exasperation of his heart.

When Runow received Brigitte's answer, van Devil had reckoned that it would be wisest to wait with his wooing until he had obtained the permission of the church to marry Hilleborg—on which account he quickly sought the pastor.

But the lazy, fat-paunched pastor, who ate only the yolks of his eggs and himself lay in the nuptial bed with Jytte Malene, Lindenow's former paramour, had the mad impudence to forbid the lord of Seven-Isles to follow his will —because he desired to wed with the sister of his son's bride.

As van Devil was not accustomed to contradiction he pressed the pastor's hand so heartily

in farewell that the flesh of two finger-joints was crushed. He took further revenge on the poor priest by forbidding peasants and men-servants, with their wives and children, to enter the sacred house of God on Sundays and feast-days. Those who went secretly to mass were flogged, and did not venture to disobey him a second time.

Then he tried by fair means to reach his goal, addressing himself to the bishop himself with gentle, pious words which he had rummaged out of old papers. But the bishop, who had already received the pastor's complaint, replied, with severe exhortations, that a man with such evil deeds upon his conscience could not—as in the evil days of Catholicism—buy the right to sin.

Now it only remained to appeal to the king, but from that side there was nothing to hope for. Whenever the lord of Seven-Isles had been called upon to serve king and country with silver, men, or corn, he had pretended to be sick, and had answered that a dying man could have no thought but for the welfare of his soul.

So he wasted many letters, filled to the brim with solemn promises, and imploring the king's

approval. Runow looked upon it as the crochet of an old man, and jested over it with Brigitte and Hilleborg, at the same time taking care that the letters did not reach their destination. Van Devil seemed to grow worse every day, and on the night of Runow's wedding he lay in sweat and fear.

The day before a whole oven-full of bricks had been spoilt. In fierce anger against the oven-heaters, who, through gossip and idleness, must have ruined his work, van Devil had had them whipped until the blood ran down their backs—like tears from the eyes of children.

As they were afterwards thrown into the dark cellar to await further punishment, one of them cried, with a voice that rang through van Devil's marrow and bones:

"The blood will not dry on our backs until
Van Devil burns in the fires of hell!"

Although no one need pay any heed to the words of so miserable a wretch, especially when uttered in anger, still, the sick man was attacked

by such violent trembling that, contrary to his custom, he allowed his light to burn all night. Sweating heavily, he drew his chests nearer to him onto the bed until there was scarcely room in it for himself.

Then Jacob came and told, in his drunkenness, what he himself had seen and what Hilleborg had confessed.

The clear colour mounted into van Devil's cheeks, and Jacob received hearty thanks for his errand, for now nothing would come of the marriage. Runow had sent word by Jacob that he would be seen no more at Seven-Isles; he was going his way and would never return. He meant to seek his fortune where destiny should cast him.

Bold and gay, Hilleborg stamped up the stairs, and van Devil asked her if she would be lady of Seven-Isles so soon as permission could be obtained.

On the same night a letter was despatched to the court in which it was stated that, as there had been no legal union between Runow's mother, the gipsy, and Pleyelt Poss van Ruyter, and as he

had no security as to the truth of her word; also, as he had never intended to acknowledge Runow as his heir, he must be released from every tie of kinship. If now the king would grant his gracious permission to the marriage of van Ruyter with Preben Lindenow's twin-daughter, Hilleborg, he would promise that three-tenths of his rents and his property during seven years should be paid in to the crown; likewise he would provide roof-tiles and wall-bricks for three royal estates, as well as free transport for them to their place of destination. In addition he would grant the crown permission to fell in the woods of Seven-Isles as many masts as there are days in leap-year.

The reply came back under the royal seal that, seeing that Runow, on the evidence of the church-register and of the Parliament, had been acknowledged lawful heir, the kinship could not be set aside and the marriage must not be allowed to take place. But in accordance with the demand of the gracious Lindenow, Brigitte's marriage was to be declared null and void, and Hil-

leborg could take to husband whomsoever her conscience approved.

In the meantime, Hilleborg lived at Seven-Isles. Although Preben was always drunk, he could not bear the sight of her, for Brigitte was the daughter of his heart.

In haste and privacy the marriage was celebrated, therefore, at Seven-Isles.

"A hard tooth and a hollow nut, a young wife and an old husband, cannot pass together," says an old proverb, and one that seldom lies.

Hilleborg was accustomed to follow her own free will; van Devil did not at once treat her to wrath and hard words, but waited silently. If her character resembled the high-springing pine, his was like the gnarled oak, and it is this which can best meet the storm.

His greed increased with the years. Never could he win back the round, white silver-dollars that Runow had cost him. He watched with anxiety every foot of his acres and every hillock of peat at Preben's, and was so stingy with the fare at Seven-Isles that every one endeavoured to snatch at something behind his back that they might not be tormented with hunger.

Only Hilleborg ate what she pleased, like the veriest glutton. Were it salted meat or roasted game, or beer-soup with sour herrings, she used

both spoon and fingers so busily that her husband in his irritation could swallow no bite, and was glad if later, in the fields, he could find a shrivelled turnip wherewith to fill his belly.

Meanwhile, at Preben's one debauch followed the other. Only on Sundays was he sober, and then he sought God's house and Jytte Malene, who ruled him with the utmost piety.

Nine months after Hilleborg's marriage the news reached Seven-Isles that Master Preben had departed this transient life.

Van Devil hastened to wash his face with clean water, comb his hair thrice with his fingers, put on his best clothes and ride to Lünegaard, instantly to interpose his will in the matter of the division of the property. But he was not admitted to Brigitte's presence, and the pastor stood beside Preben's death-bed. Jytte Malene and other willing witnesses informed him that Hilleborg was cut off from any inheritance. A written testament, duly witnessed and sealed, was in their possession.

Van Devil's chest gurgled, and he returned homewards, forgetting his horse. Hilleborg ap-

peared to be intensely satisfied, and only despatched a groom to fetch some beehives, as the bees at Seven-Isles gave little honey and very moderate mead.

Master Preben was buried under the same blue stone in the church beneath which Mistress Merthe rested. And on the stone was written:

"Beneath these stones
Rest his bones,
By his wife so true
Who sleeps here too.
Preben Lindenow of Lünegaard, he
By God's grace resurrected be."

Thereupon Brigitte left the country on a long journey, at first to encounter many difficulties as a single woman whose aim and object were understood of few, but later with much pleasure as she saw strange lands and strange customs. Simen, who was without house or home, remained at Lünegaard by her express desire.

But when a year had gone by and she began to long for the sound of her mother-tongue, she

sent for Simen, and they travelled for a long while together. And Simen, who now and again had news of Runow, passed on every word to Brigitte lest her anger should be aroused. Thus she learned amongst other things that he had set out over Fladstrand for the flat lands of Laesö, which he was to govern.

Van Devil knew no rest either day or night.

Once he struck the spoon out of Hilleborg's hand when she had thrust it too deep into the dish; another time he shot a cat, had it salted and set before her, but Hilleborg must have heard of it, for she knocked the dish onto the floor and spat into it.

Not a farthing would he pay even of what he owed, and did any one attempt to use rough words to him he lost all his self-control and his eyes grew red with rage.

Amongst his men was an old, worn-out fellow, Sören Pop by name, who was good for nothing more than to be laid under the ground. In the winter he fed the swine with husks, and until now he had received in the kitchen the wherewithal to keep life in him, little though it was.

But since van Devil had taken to prying about day and night and watching every pot and crock, no one could give him anything to eat, and he fell ill of hunger.

In his need he ate refuse out of the pig-trough, but that did him harm. Ulcers formed in his stomach and he raved in delirium.

He fancied that it might help him if he could seek out Mistress Hilleborg and complain to her of his wrongs, but hardly had he reached the hall when he sank to the ground from weakness.

He was lying there in his wretchedness when van Devil entered.

"Save me from pestilence and hunger—save me from pestilence and hunger!" he wailed, gnawing at his fingers.

But van Devil had just perceived how Hilleborg flavoured the beer for the evening meal with cinnamon, as if it were a common herb that grew by the wayside, and therefore he was in his bitterest mood. First he struck Sören so that he rolled bleeding on the ground, then threw him out of the room so that he again fell and could rise no more, and continued to beat him and to

call him a thief—when at that moment Hilleborg appeared at the door.

Fear and rage seized upon van Devil; he ran for his gun and shot Sören through the heart. Hilleborg paled a little at this unexpected sight.

Van Devil commanded his men to throw Sören Pop into the dung-pit so that the matter might be done with and forgotten.

Soon afterwards he delivered up to justice four peasants who had bribed a dairy-maid to mix poison in his food. They were taken and admitted having given her a white powder, rat-poison, that she might mix as much as would cover the point of a knife three times in his food; but not more than three, for death must not come too quickly—van Devil was to lie and suffer for some days first. The court of justice sentenced them to death; the dairy-maid who had confessed her ill-intention escaped more easily.

Hilleborg was uneasy whilst the trial lasted; also, despite their having been put to the question, the men had not revealed whence they had obtained the white powder.

One night Hilleborg was awakened by the grip

of a hand twisted in her hair, and as she sprang up a good deal of it was torn out. Van Devil swore that it had happened in his sleep, but she guessed that his object had been to shatter her head against the iron of the bed-rails, and thenceforth she slept with open eyes and only rested in the daytime.

Often the spouses lay and stared at each other until the morning came, ready to fight for their lives, each fearing the other.

Hilleborg stood in the servants' hall, amongst the serving-folk, serfs and peasants. She made them swear by the seven deadly sins and the sacred blood of God that one and all would be silent should anything be discovered.

And she offered her finest horse to him who would take van Devil's life. But their knees shook and not one of them had the courage.

Then she promised a hundred silver dollars, a good mule, and seven heifers—but not one would venture to lay a hand upon him.

At last she offered the highest thing that a noble lady can offer. She promised to marry the man who would despatch van Devil. Nine serfs held up their arms, and warm and cold shudders ran down Mistress Hilleborg's back. The nine agreed to do together what she asked, and afterwards to draw lots.

Each of them must vow with a grip of the hand to keep his word. But Hilleborg was not

yet satisfied. She wished to see van Devil in his death-agony before the end came.

She stole the key of the tower-chamber, took its model in soft wax, and had it copied by the smith. Then she went up to the tower, bound a silken cord dipped in oil about the tongue of the bell, and caused a passage to be bored for it along the wall and through the floor to the bed in the sleeping-room.

On the last evening that remained to van Devil she pulled the cord just as he sought his bed.

In anguished fear he clung to her, but she continued to pull at the cord and to pretend, in the face of his fearful listening, that she had heard nothing. Without certainty he would not remain in the darkness with her whom he feared most of all, and he mounted to the tower-chamber.

No one was there. The bell tolled over his head, and the cracked tones dinned into his ears.

Then he gave way, and his legs failed him. Like a wounded animal he was forced to creep from step to step down to the room where Hilleborg lay.

All the doors stood open behind him, the clang of the bell followed him. He climbed into his bed, flung his arms about Hilleborg and hid his face in her strong body. Wilder, ever wilder clanged the bell. He bored his fingers into his ears until the blood sprang from them, but even then he heard the sound.

Until her arms were weary Hilleborg continued to pull at the cord. Van Devil, quite out of his senses, whimpered and wept. With daylight he recovered his courage, but the door of the tower-chamber was not closed. And those who saw him creep out to the brick-kiln did not recognize him, so great had been the terror of the night.

An hour later he lay shot before the brick-kiln. His body was riddled with many bullets, like a target. But no one had heard the shots, and not one of the serfs' guns was capable of being discharged.

Upstairs in the hall Mistress Hilleborg sat and cleaned her guns.

No one wondered that the widow of so old a man wore no mourning. And as no evidence

could be obtained no one came under suspicion. For the serfs stood fast and united over their deed—and knew besides that heaven would look graciously upon it. Therefore had the bell tolled by night without touch of human hand to announce his death.

But many were astonished that Mistress Hilleborg should be plighted before the altar to the peasant, Tune, and should bear him children who took his name.

Runow sat alone in his great official residence, Klitgaard, over the threshold of which no one stepped unbidden.

The fathom-thick roof of sea-weed hung over window and door, shutting out air and light, like the cover of a coffin.

In the silence he could hear the boring of the worms in bench and post, and the moths devouring, thread by thread, the tapestries on the walls. If he stood upright his head touched the ceiling and dead flies rained down from the mouldy cobwebs between the low beams. But for the most part Runow walked with bowed shoulders.

When the wind swept over the earth and whirled against the house the woodwork creaked and every loose object jarred. On many a night he wandered sleepless and depressed about the strand, his gaze following unconsciously the irregularities of the coast—when the day broke he traced the footprints which marked the same

path. He distinguished them clearly in the white sand; they belonged to his own feet—he had made the circuit of the island.

Then he would go up to the dunes, forget to take the road home, and remain sitting there for hours at a time whilst the sun rose out of the sea and the fish sprang up in golden flashes. He would stare and stare out before him as though he were trying to decipher the runes that the foam of the waves wrote in the shallows, and to read from them his destiny. The sea-birds returned home from their fishing. With joyful cries they surrounded their prey and flew down upon the level shore that the sea had spat out and then forsaken.

Like a field hidden under the bloom of flowers the sand was covered with speckled eggs. The young ones cried for food and the mothers divided fish and worms amongst them. But soon a fierce strife would arise between old and young. Eggs would be crushed, young birds pecked to death. When the strife was ended the conquerors remained on the battlefield, the conquered

set forth over the sea to seek new booty and other roosting-places.

One morning the shallows lay spread out in shining nakedness. No egg, no young bird was to be seen. But the women of the island, whose faces were half hidden beneath their black head-kerchiefs, sat in a circle under the dunes, the eggs amongst them.

Runow chanced to be present when the birds returned and were received by the watchers, who ran up and down the strand with a mournful flapping of wings. They all raised a hissing cry that awoke the echoes of sea and land, and rushed against the dunes as if to tear both eggs and broods from the laughing women. But they were frightened off with stones.

For two summers no bird built its nest on the flats.

When Runow returned to Klitgaard towards noon he was tired and sleepy, and would while away the remainder of the day in sleep and insignificant work.

The island appeared to him unfruitful as the vault-stones of the church floor, and sad as the

grey mists of autumn. Surrounded by the tossing sea, always covered with scudding clouds, it lay as if under a heavy curse. In vain the waves wrapped it round with supple arms, trying to draw it down into the deep; in vain the wind stormed around it from the four quarters of heaven, trying to root it up and shake it loose. Firm and immovable the island defied their efforts.

Runow could not find occupations or pleasant thoughts to beguile the time. Hissing like adders the latter crept about him; he could not escape from them.

He cared more—little though that might be—for the heather that ate its way in great rusty masses over the whole land, than for the island-folk whose quarrels he was there to adjudicate. Their speech was poor in words as the cry of the sea-gull in notes, and the opinion of their hearts was shut in with seven-times-seven locks of silence.

In the southern wing of Klitgaard lay the apartments of the bailiff and his clerk. From sheer weariness Runow had decreed that they

should settle the majority of difficulties without his intervention. If, however, it happened that he was summoned to the hall of justice he judged with righteous severity, and never mildly.

The people greeted him with bent backs, but their greeting was suggestive of derision. He knew that they hated him.

It had happened several times that, in his night wanderings, he saw how the island folk themselves extinguished the lanterns which law and chapter bade them keep alight from evening until morning. On these occasions he acted, despite his distaste for his office. If, during the day, he chanced to see a peasant goading his oxen too cruelly under the yoke he was not afraid to judge and fine him, contrary to all custom.

And the Laesö peasants did not forget.

Every man who wore a stinking sheepskin jerkin felt himself to be lord of the island and the sea; they held loyally by each other in their endeavour to maintain this right of lordship. Otherwise there was enmity between man and man for the sake of ancient feud and new injus-

tice, and nowhere in the kingdom was there so much discord and self-defence as upon Laesö.

But if two peasants, disputing in their huts, bit off each other's noses, they did not appeal to the governor.

The laws which were administered to the island by the Viborg chapter-house were strict. But as laws were but a matter of words, and words could be carried away by the winds, the men of Laesö cared not a straw for them.

Of what avail was it that the chapter-house imposed a search for those who had defied the law that their lives might pay the forfeit? The people had as many hiding-places as the fox, and it was seldom that they were caught red-handed.

Where shallows rendered navigation difficult buoys were floated, but either they broke away or else the chains bound them in the wrong places, so that the skipper, in all good faith, steered straight for the land and lost his cargo if not his life.

As, in addition to this, the shore-lanterns were extinguished, there were necessarily shipwrecks in abundance.

During a storm the people of the island would assemble, without speech or sound, in the dangerous parts of the coast, to await the hour when there would be wreckage to fetch and corpses to plunder. Bailiff and customs-officer received their share in proportion to the number of their children, and shut their eyes to what happened.

As the shifting sand gained ground so rapidly it was forbidden to fell young trees and hack open spaces in the woods. But the salt-pans devoured much wood, and what the day might fear the night smiled upon.

The people felled trees where and when they pleased. In addition they set up more salt-pans than the law permitted. The island had a superfluity of sea-weed, but in order to deceive the gentlemen of the chapter-house they placed hut-roofs over the salt-pans that they might escape observation.

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Like a lean cow with muzzled jaws in long grass, the poor ruined church had stood in the midst of the richest diocese of the island.

Had the community given according to its

possessions the roof of the church would have been covered with silver plates instead of with wretched turf. But the whitewash fell from the walls and the damp ran down them, worms devoured the chairs, and the pulpit was a heap of rotting planks—the pastor had to stand upon level ground where streams of rain splashed down upon his gown.

For the most part he preached to the sexton and his deaf wife.

The people were industrious. And if on the high holidays of the year they thronged into the church it was not out of piety. They struck one another on the mouth and quarrelled so loudly that the pastor had to be silent. Over their heads the crows cawed down. Should there be an offertory the people crowded out, each one trying to be first, and the pastor remained alone with empty hands.

In the belfry hung a bell so enormous that it sounded far and wide over the island, even to the huts of the herring-fishers in the north. No one obeyed its voice, though the sexton pulled at the rope with all his strength. Then came the storm,

like a blow in the face from the angry hand of God. The cattle buried their horns in the earth, stretched their four legs in the air, and bellowed. The people threw themselves on the ground that the wind might not dislocate their limbs and blow their eyes out through their ears.

The storm roared and the bell sounded, but no human hand tugged at the cord, for the sexton was lying flat on his stomach and wailing. Trees were torn out of the earth by their roots and flew through the air, roofs were lifted from the huts like box-covers.

Sharp and pricking like ice-needles the fine sand blew in through chinks and spaces, covering the hearth-fires and the people's bodies. Three days and three nights long the storm raged. No one tasted food or slept. Then at last the weather grew calm.

Cows lay far from the herd with burst udders, sheep ran about like mad dogs with red jaws. The walls of the church lay in broken heaps, the belfry tossed on a sand-dune, the bell itself sunk in the sand. The whole diocese was a waste

of sand, low hillocks showing where house and farm had stood—but time levelled them all.

The poverty which followed now was the just punishment of heaven.

The island folk implored the great lords of the chapter-house for help to rebuild the church as an atonement. The answer came back, "A mighty finger has testified—for the sake of your degeneracy you shall suffer want."

The ruins were doomed in future to lie untouched by human hand. The people had to be content with Bürum chapel, which was low and narrow.

And no one built his hut near the fallen church.

Only the birds of prey who lived in strife with the owls of the wood, came by night to shatter their booty upon its stones.

But the sand blew round about the bell and against the living metal with a sound like the low humming of insects that never ceased. And a little whirlpool turned and turned under it, drew up the sand and spat it out again—quickly and noiselessly, as ants erect their mound.

In its fall the tongue of the bell had sprung from its hook and buried itself deep in the ground; it was over this that the whirlpool formed itself. Under the bell there was a hollow large enough to admit a man's body. Strand-grass protected the opening with its roots so that the drifting sand could not close it up. The red foxes that crept inside to dig the hollow still deeper were smoked out that their stench might not offend Almighty God.

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In winter-time Runow sat like a shivering woman and stared with red-rimmed eyes into the blazing peat-fire. However the smoke might stifle him he let his throat burn with thirst rather than go out to refresh himself in the cold air. He amused himself with a pair of dice that he had himself carved out of ivory. He tossed them lightly in his hands and thought of the time when Brigitte and he had thrown dice together on the dyke of the high-road as children love to do.

But outside sky and sea met in a grey, gaping waste, at one moment like mist, at another like a wall.

Then a storm would come out of the west and fling itself upon the island, waking him from his lethargy so that, as a free man, he stamped upon the ground, forgot shame, resentment and remorse, and marked out his way as he himself willed it. Then he would feel himself to be one with the law. He sat in the hall of justice no longer indifferent, and it was of little use for the peasants to swear solemn oaths with uplifted fingers; every word was written in the registers, the matter gone into carefully, sheaf by sheaf evenly divided, and justice had its way.

At the end of the third winter, just as the ice broke, came news from Seven-Isles, but it was not good news. Hilleborg sent Runow, as his one and only inheritance, the bed with the iron spikes whence he had so often watched in terror phantom forms rise in the night. It was only to revile him that she sent it to him now, shortly before her second marriage. But it did not hurt him.

After much trouble and turning the bed was taken through the house-door and three rooms to Runow's sleeping-apartment, which, next to the

hall of justice, was the largest of the Klitgaard chambers.

The red curtains hung about the bed-posts like torn, faded flags, and as Runow had no servant who knew how to mend with careful hand, he himself set to work and folded the stuff so that the one hole after the other was hidden.

In spite of his repugnance he determined to sleep in the bed. But when, on nights of storm, the iron railings shook around him like anchor-chains so that he could not rest, it seemed to him that he saw once more the hairy breast of his father rising and falling in sleep, and that he could smell again the strong odour of the dogs and their wet hides.

In deep shame he remembered that his father had not lain alone in the bed, but with Hilleborg beside him.

Odds and ends of information, threads of truth and cobwebs of lies, reached Runow concerning the little girl who wandered wild and lonely about the island, without seeking shelter on any hearth. Most people believed that a phantom ship had brought her thither, as no flotsam or jetsam were cast up. The rudder-tracks of the ship had long since been obliterated when they found her sleeping on the sea-weed masses of the shore. As the all-seeing Eye of God was watching over her they did not kill her, but the shore-bailiff carried her home to his hut with but scant joy at the prospect of feeding a strange bird in a narrow nest.

She spat into the food that was set before her, and screamed so naughtily and ran so bewilderedly from wall to wall, like a falcon in a cage, that they soon let her wander out into the open air as she chose. She ran straight towards the sea, and her wailing did not cease night or day.

Towards evening she allowed herself willingly to be led back to the hut, and swallowed a little of the despised food. They could see by the working of her lips that it tasted to her like henbane.

The folk drew off her silken clothes to examine her naked and see whether she were marked as a witch; but they could find nothing.

She could not be induced to creep under the warm skins where the people of the hut and motherless lambs were together sheltered from the night, but curled herself up on the bare floor by the threshold, and there she slept. Before daylight coloured the sky and sea she pushed back the door-bolt and slipped out. Day after day she watched for the phantom ship.

When the next evening came and she grew fearful of the dew and of the night, she did not seek the same hut again, but the one that happened to be nearest her. No one shut their door against her, lest she should cast the evil eye on their children or cattle. But as time went on the island folk were more and more ready to leave her to herself.

Not a single friend did she possess, and she never spoke a word, even when the primitive speech of the island grew familiar to her ears. But when the salt-pans were busy and the endless song of the men rang through the night, whilst the flame ate its way through the damp sea-weed and the air quivered with the heat of the fires, she drew near to look and listen. The men did not fear her nor she them. And when the sun stood high in the vault of heaven she plucked and plucked the juicy blueberries that grew by the thousand amongst the heather and the broom like shining beetles. It was her way of thanking them for their confidence and the men were glad, for the berries refreshed them more than mead and the sour hop-drink.

In the summer nights she would bear no roof over her head, but tripped out into the water as far as she felt the ground under her feet, seated herself on a rock that rose out of it, splashed about after the little fishes, and whistled to the seals. These latter came from far off, drew a wide circle about the rock and listened to her notes, but at first they would not venture to ap-

proach. Then she would suddenly be silent, scarcely breathing. As if rooted to the rock she would sit there. And the creatures took courage. Nearer and nearer they would draw until at last they climbed upon the rock so that she might stroke with her hands their silver-white coats. But if a night-fisher came in sight they slid back into the water to the fish.

The island-folk had taken her clothes and put on her others that pricked her skin like nettles, so that she often had to shake herself. But in time she grew accustomed to them and no longer noticed their coarseness.

Runow was so wont to see women and children get out of his way at his approach that he had not remarked the slender maid who disappeared behind the dunes whenever he came within a bow-shot of her.

On the other hand, he wondered that he so often smelled a perfume of roses, since no rose-tree would take root upon the island. He could follow the scent, winding and twisting, from which he concluded that it was no morbid imagining of his brain. But if he took only two steps to the side of the path he followed he lost the trail in the smell of the sea or the strong odour of the peat. On windless days he often scented the perfume in the valley at the foot of the dunes.

But once he saw in the wet sand where his own foot-prints had left their track, little fresh marks made by short-tripping feet. Who walked here with naked feet? The island-folk so wrapped themselves in wool and skins that the sweat rolled

down them if they so much as moved, and they swathed their children, too, from head to foot.

Here and there the tracks laid inside his own; he could see how carefully they had been made that his might not be broken. And suddenly it became clear to him that it must be she who was entered in the register as being without name or country or age.

Unexpectedly she began to occupy his thoughts.

One evening he was wandering beside the sea. Poisonous memories were weighing on his soul, each one wounding him with its sting.

Now he saw Cornelia seated in her narrow cell. Did she long for the chamber in which she had once passed rapturous nights—or was her longing now dead? Had the vesper-bell the power to rock her mind to peace so that every sigh became a humble prayer and atonement?—or did the wind carry away with it the cry of her red, trembling lips?

If she should come to him over the sea, borne by the obedient wind and the healing darkness—if she should come with her tender love, wind the

fair plaits about his neck and laugh so that the birds forgot that it was night and sang with her —Cornelia!

Ah! It would be to bind a poultice on a miserable scratch whilst blood sprang from every pore.

For Brigitte—and only Brigitte—only she in all the world—

Endless melancholy overwhelmed him. His head sank to the ground, he pressed his forehead upon the sea-sand and his tears flowed.

The little maid was quite near, but he did not know it. Every time that he stopped and drew breath with a sigh she held her hand before her mouth that he might not hear how sadly she too was obliged to sigh.

Ever since the night when he had passed the rock on which she sat, and looked at her with unseeing eyes whilst the moonlight fell upon his face, she had thought of him. Night after night she had followed him noiselessly from point to point of land. Him, the mightiest man of the island!

But she never dared to approach him by day.

Only once, when she found him sleeping on the dunes, she had crept up to him and touched his forehead with her finger.

Now she stood terrified. Her ears were sharp as those of the birds of prey, but what sounds were these? He lay still, quite still, like the cold people whom the sea rolled in upon the strand after a storm. Never before had she seen men weep, now she felt so great a pain that she must needs bite her lips.

To console herself she began to hum the song that her mother and the other women had sung down by the river when they washed their linen. She rocked the upper part of her body to and fro as they had been wont to do, and when the song came to an end she closed it with the long complaint that arose along the shore when the bodies of sucklings floated down the stream amongst great blossoms. Then the women bowed their heads until their hair touched the water, wetted their eyes, and plucked upon the shore flowers with long stems which they sent floating after the little bodies. She would not think of it more,

for then she saw again how the man seized her mother and how the other women stoned her.

Runow rose. He felt two damp, cold hands on his face. He encircled with his arms a supple, trembling body. From the hair came that intoxicating perfume of roses that had so often guided his footsteps.

He tried to speak, but she laid her little hand over his mouth, and seated herself beside him in the sand, rocking her head and crying and laughing. Then she fell asleep.

The people murmured when the governor of the island so forgot the high dignity of his office as to take the crafty huzzy into his house as though she had been of his kin. And in addition he bribed that servant of the Lord, Magister Egede Glob, to perform a sacrilegious baptism; for he gave her the name of the eternally cursed and called her Kaina.

But he named her thus after his mother.

Runow considered it right that she should be instructed in all the excellent laws of God and the precepts of the Bible. In this he requested the aid of Egede Glob.

But to all that the pastor tried to impress upon her with rolling eyes and whirling arms and a bellow like that of a bull, she listened as to the rush and roar of the wind and water; she understood not a word of it.

If he continued to repeat it with waxing anger

she pressed her jaws together and ground her teeth as if she were eating sand.

When he exorcised her, laying his hand on her head, a shudder shook her down to her knees, for his fingers smelled of stale fish. But he saw in this a proof that the Evil One had entered into her and that his unclean blood flowed in her veins.

Glob would undoubtedly have driven the devil out of her in another fashion had the instruction taken place elsewhere than at Klitgaard and in the very room where Runow himself sat. But Runow gave himself plenty of leisure, and the pastor must put up with the shame of seeing how, whenever he threw her a glance, the huzzy laughed all over her face. It was true that they did not speak to each other whilst the lesson lasted, but dumb lips and gleaming eyes can be eloquent enough, and Glob saw clearly that they held intercourse in spite of it, though in a tongue that, like the motes in the sunshine of a room, danced noiselessly up and down.

At length Egede Glob begged to be relieved of all responsibility for the uncomprehending

maid. She understood that and peeped up joyfully under half-closed eyelids. Runow agreed and undertook the post of spiritual instructor himself. He chose the book of Chronicles, and tried with vivid words to impress it upon her. Quietly and gently she listened to him, but if he was silent another chronicle formed itself dreamily upon her lips, unlike that of the Bible, but equally splendid. It seemed as though she forced her words out with difficulty; they came drop by drop, and never in a stream. In the midst of it she would suddenly pause and listen with uplifted hand as if she would seize what she heard, but soon the words began again to trickle out.

Runow was obliged to divide the time for her, and to separate day and night, that day might be employed for work and the night for rest. He placed, in the narrow chamber near his own room, a little bed for the girl. But for a long time she would not climb into it.

Runow had to show her how to take off her clothes, and he himself crept into his railed bed.

Then came the night. The curtains of the bed

looked black. She could not see him, but she could very well hear him, and he pretended to sleep.

Kaina crouched on the steps of the bed, her face in her hands.

Then Runow got up and opened the trap-door of the loft. Overhead was the clear opening of the roof.

Now she could see the stars and hear the night-wind pass across the sky. Runow drew a stool under the opening, seated himself beside her, and told her about the stars far away up above them, that wandered from eternity to eternity in their destined course. But if one star loved another and could never reach it, it threw itself from the vault of heaven down into the sea, and was extinguished and drowned.

Not Brigitte, but Cornelia, had taught him in her innocence what he now told the child by night.

But Kaina sat beside him, her face turned up to the window, and dreamed out into the night-sky.

No—the stars were souls. Souls, that have

never prayed for eternal peace. They die and God pulls off their wings, that they may not fly about in the holy heaven. But over the clouds where the white cold and the god of hunger dwell, they are nailed fast. They shiver with fear and cold. Then they suffer remorse and long for the river that sings eternal songs. At last Buddha pities them and gives the souls their wings again, but they have forgotten how to fly and fall tired into the blue water where people sail in long boats. So soon as they touch the water, however, they are changed into silver scales, and the scales fasten themselves on the nimble fish, that carry them over the seven seas and the hundred waters of the world to the singing river that is ever grey like the mist on the mountains.

Runow looked up to the hurrying clouds. The sickle of the moon glided forth. It was midnight. He felt Kaina's head rest on his shoulder —she was asleep. He carefully carried her to her couch.

After that she slept willingly in the narrow bed, but the oaken rails made blue marks on her

arms and legs when she rolled herself about in the confined space.

Runow taught her to write, and half the day through she wrote with a stick in the smooth sand. Runow was wise, and he had said that written messages could be carried to the middle of the world, and so she wrote to the souls of her mother and all her little sisters who lived under the great mountains.

Runow taught her to count on her fingers the days of the month, and the days of the year. It occurred to her to count the stars and to write in the sand how many fell and were changed to silver scales.

Faithfully she worked with slate and pencil. As she did so her tongue crept out of the corner of her mouth, and her black, curly hair twined about the slate. But in the hooks of the letters and figures she drew little flowers, little fishes, and little stars, and Runow had some difficulty in finding his way in the maze of her writing.

Sometimes Runow's duties took him to the wood in the centre of the island to give attention to the felling and planting of trees, but this journey was not to his taste.

In the woods of Lünegaard and Seven-Isles the trees had stood like pillars in the aisle of a church. Through the vaulted crowns the light filtered as through a silken sieve and fell in narrow rays upon the ground where fern and woodruff took root. The cattle-bells tinkled in many-toned echoes. Heavy-bellied swine trotted along in slow herds, and the bushy tails of the foxes chased gleaming butterflies into flight. If the air darkened at twilight or during rain, humming swarms of gnats passed through the underbrush. And every branch bore a nest.

But in the Laesö wood it was dark and cold. The network of branches was knotted so fast with tough twigs that not even a snake could creep through the thick mass. Between slimy

pools and dead branches poisonous mushrooms shot up out of the earth. When the wood-cutter drove his axe into the roots, or his saw into the bark of a tree by the light of the lantern—for nothing would catch fire in the damp air—one heard a mournful shriek like the cry of an animal in pain. The edge of the axe would be blunt by the third stroke and the teeth of the saw bit like a knife in water. But it happened, too, that trunks five ells in circumference went down like old men knocked over by a box on the ear when the axe was only three inches deep in the bark. That the nutrition of the soil was exhausted could be seen when the seven hundred young saplings that were sent every year from Säby by ship and planted in the clearings, immediately rotted and did not take root.

Kaina feared the darkness of the woods and hesitated to accompany Runow. Again and again she promised to go with him, but when he took the road Kaina was gone, and when he came home she went so coaxingly to meet him that he could not be angry with her. But one day Kaina went readily enough.

So long as the light from the fringe of the wood surrounded their path her hand rested quietly in his like a sleeping bird. Runow bent gently over her with encouraging words, but he saw that she walked as if in sleep with wide-open, dark eyes. He pretended not to notice it, and held her hand the faster. They went farther. Darkness wrapped them round.

Suddenly she tore her hand from his and rushed away before he could recover himself and hold her back.

Round about them rang the screams of the axes—was it these that had frightened Kaina?

"Kaina," he cried, "Kaina!" Echo called back the name, but without answer. Sometimes it seemed to him as if he heard twigs and branches crackle and the rustle of creeping game.

From one tree to another he called her and wondered at the hoarse croaking that rebounded from the trunks.

Frightened child, silly child! With covered eyes she could tell the four quarters of the heaven. She could not lose her way from here

back to Klitgaard. But even if she were lost the wood was not half a mile wide in its widest part. Half of it was probably play and half fright.

She would soon find her way out to the golden sunshine and run towards the dunes. In a little while she would be lying there exceedingly pleased at her trick.

He forced himself to believe this, but went forward slowly, listening to every rustling sound whenever the axes were silent.

Then he saw the reddish-yellow glow of the flickering lanterns, heard the rough voices of the woodmen, and could distinguish the saw from the axe. The work ceased for a while, the men turned to him and murmured a "good day" and "good journey," but no one smiled at him in welcome. And once more the axe made wedges in the marked trees. The lanterns were carried round the men's throats, so that the light fell upon their faces and streaked the ground as if with bloody wounds.

"Have you seen Kaina—she ran away from me?" he asked, and could not keep himself from

asking. But no one answered him, and he continued, "If she should pass show her the way back to Klitgaard immediately."

All were silent. But as he continued his path he heard a burst of laughter that cut him to nerve and bone, for he knew that they were mocking at him for the sake of Kaina.

He wandered on at hazard. Then there came to his ear a shriek so piercing that he must needs cry out, too. And now he rushed on, knocking himself against the tree-trunks as if he would turn them over, ran and ran.

And no one answered him. He tried to deaden his fear. Was it only an imaginary cry with which his excited imagination had deceived him? Or was it the scream of the saw against a hard knot, or a wounded bird?

But his anxiety increased, and he could hear the beating of his heart.

Every mound of earth upon the island should be claimed as forfeit if a hair of Kaina's head were injured. Every man should leave his work, form a circle about the wood and search. The peat-holes should be dragged to the bottom. But

the sea—the sea was beyond the power and will of man.

He seated himself upon a stump, dead tired. His thoughts rested with folded wings. He fell into a doze. When he rose he recollected the errand that had led him to the wood, and to provide himself with occupation he returned to the wood-cutters and ordered them to leave their work and to spend the following seven days in planting. Should the salt-pans need fuel they might rest or use the time in scraping sea-weed. The planting must not be postponed.

They knew well enough that if the governor of the island brought them the message himself it was because the matter was urgent, for the lords of the chapter-house were severe. They bowed their backs in acquiescence, but continued their task.

"Have you seen Kaina?"

There was little sympathy in face or back as they drawled out their "nay."

"Did you hear anything cry out?"

"Wet saws soon grow rusty in their speech—

and the axe-blades screech more than they sing —we have heard no other cry!"

Runow grew angry at the answer.

"Do you loiter to do my bidding and obey the orders of the chapter-house?"

One murmured, sulkily, "Cannot the women grub in the earth and plant in our place?"

"You have heard my order—be off at once to your work!"

They mumbled, half surly, half afraid, with loose lips, but dried the blades of their axes on their sleeves, hung their saws over their shoulders, fastened their lights aright and tramped away. The soil squelched under their weight. Giant shadows glided out from between the tree-trunks and followed them.

Runow went towards the sea where Kaina was wont to play. She was not there.

When he reached Klitgaard he found Idel, the wife of the net-weaver, Germund, waiting for him on the threshold. She came in the name of God and of all submissive island-folk, but especially sent by Hendrik, the strand-bailiff. He dared no more keep the bits of silver and

silk that Kaina had worn when she was found. Four winters they had lain on the beams between two blessed wooden crosses, and Hendrik would not open the bundle. He did not give it away either, for no one would have it in his house. It was full of perfume, strong as mead, and tickled the nostrils. But with time the smell of fish and the smoke had driven out the perfume. Hendrik would have kept silence till his death but that his twin-lambs, four weeks old and fat, lay with stretched-out legs.

He had asked counsel of wise men and they had declared that evil powers lay in the bundle on the beam. In addition, the upper cross had fallen down into the ashes with a great noise the night before as the cock crowed, and as Hendrik had crept out of bed to save the holy symbol, he had burned himself badly in the embers. Here was the bundle. Hendrik had promised to set an iron band on Idel's broken door if she would go in place of him to the gracious lord.

But as she feared all further conversation on the subject she waddled away.

Runow opened the knots of the creased mor-

sels that had covered Kaina's body years before when she lay out upon the sea-weed. He smoothed out the silk. It was fine and soft, and the colours were subdued like the shimmer of a vanishing rainbow. He found a little bodice with arm-holes, the rest seemed to consist of handkerchiefs, sashes and bands, all glimmering with silken threads.

It was now too small for the maiden who cried for a birch-bath and combed her hair with her fingers.

In a reverie he spread the pieces over her bed. There lay, under her pillow, the little silver tube filled with oil pressed from the roses of the mountains, the tube that was covered with runes in Kaina's tongue, wound about with needle-fine braids, and protected by a sheath of ebony. It had crossed the sea to Kaina like a greeting from the home-land. And she greedily preserved the costly drops, each of which intoxicated with its perfume. Only when the moon changed and when Kaina, turned towards the east, recited her childish prayer, did she salve with it the crown of her head and the soles of

her feet. All over the house one could trace the perfume—but Kaina was not there.

Runow longed for rest and the hunger of a whole day gnawed at him, but he dared not seek repose. Distant thunder shook the floor of the house, the benches creaked. He opened the door and went out. The clouds hung low. Under them the wind blew from the east and from the west with burning heat. Like summer lightning the fluttering butterflies shimmered against the thunder-clouds. Moor-hens hurried to their nests. Beetles buzzed towards the heather, seeking shelter.

The sea swelled heavily, cleft by swift flashes. Out of the deafening noise grew silence, and all was still again. The rain began to fall.

Runow reached the boundary of the wood. Flashes of lightning made the earth seem red with glowing steam. He gasped, suffocated by the heat.

He must find the child and press her to his breast. And out of the deep anxiety of his heart arose the certainty that Kaina was now near.

He hesitated, fearing to tread upon her, and stood still to listen.

But the thunder roared about him as if all the rolling stones from the bottom of the sea had been whirled up into the clouds and again cast down by force of gravity upon the wood, followed by pouring spring floods.

A flash illumined everything around him. In the glow he saw Kaina but two steps away, her arms stretched out towards him. There was blood on her face. But another flash broke through the clouds and felled him to the ground and towards Kaina. He felt the blood from her face trickle over his forehead and was seized with horror. Pains shot through every limb, and they were as if crippled, but the warm blood streamed over his brow and glued his eyelids together.

It was late in the night when Runow at length ventured to rise, take Kaina in his arms and flee from the wood.

But she was dumb as a dead bird. He only knew that she lived by the beating of her heart against his own. He became easier when she

lay in her narrow bed and her wounds had been dressed with linen soaked in oil, and her breath came and went softly in sleep.

He meant to watch over her until the day came, and to learn from her what had happened in the wood. But he slept beside her and only awakened in the clear daylight. Kaina sat on the floor, busily binding the gay-coloured silks about her body. She stretched them out and shook her head in amazement. She cried imploringly, pathetically, in the tongue of which Runow understood not a syllable. Then she passed her hand over her arms and legs as if she were seeking something that was gone. Runow fetched from the corner by the stove all the chains of amber and mussel-shell that she had strung together and was wont to bind on her ankles and arms, but she let them fall through her fingers to the floor, wept bitterly, and covered her face with her hair.

Days and weeks passed before she came to herself again. Then she only knew that she had let go of Runow's hand and had fallen over a bough with living teeth. It had bitten her fore-

head, and all the other trees had tried to bite her too. She had heard him call, but had not been able to utter a word.

That was the only time that Kaina entered the wood of Laesö.

One night she awoke. Runow's stealthy footsteps had disturbed her dreams, and now she heard him walking up and down, up and down.

For four days she had tried in vain to capture his glance. It had passed over her and by her without meeting hers. She put her fingers in her ears, but the knocking in her head only sounded louder. For a long time he continued to walk up and down, and at length he threw himself upon his bed, unable to rest.

Kaina struggled to remain quiet. Twice she sat up, the third time she sprang out onto the floor, folded her hands cross-wise over her breast to subdue the beating of her heart, and crept over the threshold to Runow. Over the iron steps she reached the railing, pushed back the door, and glided inside like a bird into its nest.

Runow could scarcely breathe so tightly did she press her arms about his neck, and he was forced to laugh. But in the same moment Kaina

realized that she was naked, and overcome with shame, crept over to the wall. There she lay and sobbed, with all her ten fingers in her mouth. Runow thought that evil dreams had frightened her, and had not the heart to send her away, but talked to her gently.

As she would not leave off crying he thought that there must be something wrong with her, and asked whether she suffered.

And as he asked that she felt an intense pain under her left breast. She pressed her hand upon it without answering, and Runow, who saw the gesture, put out his hand to touch the sore place; but he felt that her breast was round and warm as that of a maiden.

He drew back his hand and suddenly found himself unable to speak.

To break the shamed silence he began to twist her long hair about his hand. It was so long that it flowed over the pillow onto the smooth leather of the couch, and it smelled of roses.

He spread it over his tired eyes and his face, and laid his cheek to rest upon it. Unconsciously he continued to pull lock after lock towards him,

and did not notice that her head yielded and was bent backwards by his gentle tugs. At last her neck lay under his mouth, but then he fell asleep —resting heavily on Kaina's hair.

She dared not move even to draw the coverlet over her shivering body or to creep nearer to him. Her head was so near his that every breath warmed her neck comfortingly.

The hair stretched and the roots pricked like sharp thorns. But he might pull every hair from her head if it so pleased him, she would make no sound.

And he slept on.

"Brigitte—Brigitte——" She did not forget the word. Was it a star, was it a flower? But as he cried it again in piteous tones Kaina became jealous of the word. She knew that Runow had come from over the sea, but she knew neither river nor mountain of his native land.

In the morning when Runow lifted his head from the pillow to see what the hour might be he was greatly astounded, for there lay Kaina as naked as if the sea had thrown her up. And he had slept upon her hair—and dreamed sweetly

of Brigitte. He wished to spread the coverlet over her, her shoulders were so cold that they chilled his hands; but he would not let his glance rest on her, feeling that it would be an insult to the young body. And when Kaina awoke a moment later Runow lay staring at the ceiling.

No, never had he enjoyed such healthy slumber or dreamed so sweetly as now with his head upon her hair. This night he had been wandering in a rose-garden.

He told her so without turning his eyes upon her, rose, and dressed himself hastily that she might have the couch in peace.

The railing was cold, but from the middle of the bed where Runow had lain there streamed towards her a warmth that caught at her as if with supple fingers. She knew not what to do for shame, fire seemed to trickle down her back. When she walked her knees knocked together, and she felt the warm life of her body like another being that wrapped her round and devoured her, and would no more let her be.

But Runow had said, "Never have I slept so soundly."

Kaina weighed her hair in her hand and went to Germund's good-natured wife, Idel. Old Idel took the sheep-shears, sang a penitential psalm, and cut all the hair from Kaina's head. Like broken tendrils the locks fell to the ground, and as each fell it was like a stab through bone and marrow. It seemed to her that the hair moaned. Over the stubble of her head Idel strewed ashes from the hearth that Kaina might not be attacked by the cold pestilence.

And Kaina left the hut carrying the dead, cold hair. It had curled so wildly before. Now it lay smooth from wrist to wrist like a skein of wool to be wound. It felt chill and damp.

From the bundle under her pillow she chose a piece of silk, red as poppies, went to Idel once more, and for three whole days learned to cut and sew out of the silk a little cushion. With the last drops of the oil of roses from her little tube she scented her hair, hid it in the cushion and sewed it up. Where the couch was highest she laid it. But she felt as though she had torn her own red heart from her breast and given it to Runow.

And night after night Runow slept upon it and could not turn his thoughts from the stubbly head of the child and her eyes that no longer met his, but were downcast in pain and shame.

The spring days came, so rich in light from the high heaven down to the white floor of the sea; but the light blinded him. The sun itself seemed to stand between him and her, his words sounded as distant as a call from mountain to mountain over a deep valley.

Runow called her a child, and knew that she was a maiden. His manner towards her changed as a wind that blows from hot to cold. If she entered, unexpectedly and humbly, the chamber in which he was bending gloomily over his heavy law-books, he drove her away again either with his silence or unwilling words, or he himself left the room. But if she wandered away from Klitgaard and lay down to rest wherever she chanced to be when night fell, his mind would be filled with vain unrest.

One day he sent an urgent message to Fladstrand, to purchase for Kaina more suitable garments and robes reaching to the ground, that he

need no longer be obliged to notice how her limbs took on softly rounded forms. But for her hair, that grew luxuriantly like shoots on a lopped tree-trunk, a comb and a tight-fitting cap. Kaina obediently put on the garments, but felt herself like a miserable prisoner in the many bands and strings.

There came a day when Runow had double bolts set upon the oaken door between Kaina's chamber and his own, so that in future he must pass by the wing of the house and through the turret-door when he wished to enter his room from the others. He could give no other reason for this than that now Kaina might sleep undisturbed by him.

He himself drew the bolt and fastened a padlock upon the door—yet he often left his couch, drawn by greedy longing, to try whether it were not open. But it did not give under his grasp.

It would have had to be broken in.

But what he would have done had it been open he himself did not know.

In a letter from Simen came a greeting written by Brigitte's hand; a greeting and nothing more. It was like an empty tankard set to the lips of a thirsty man.

Brigitte was at Lünegaard, surrounded by suitors for her hand and heart. Over the drawbridge they were so easily admitted to the manor, so hospitably received, and then so quietly despatched, that it was pitiful to see. She sat at her embroidery-frame and drew her needleful of the reddest wool in and out of the linen, whether the suitors laughed or wept. And on the linen appeared storks with long beaks, geese, churches, and skies with clouds, all rosy-red. As she smiled in greeting to them and as she smiled in farewell she showed all her white teeth, but closed her lips tightly to every fresh proposal.

Simen sat beside her in the hall. He would draw maps of the lands that they had seen, with dots for every town and lines for every river

they had visited, and with Simen she discussed all manner of topics.

On the linen there appeared also ripe grapes and begging friars—she was no past-mistress in the art of needlework, and Simen often laughed at her; but she could always tell him when and where she had seen this, that, and the other.

He had advised her to keep a journal from the beginning of their voyage; it was well to do so if one wished to retain the memory of it. There still lay in her travel-chest with the bronze bands an almanac full of empty pages, but one word was written on the first and last. It was "Runow," and nothing but that.

As she now sat at Lünegaard in her stately splendour, knowing that Hilleborg, in a peasant's dress of coarse ticking, was forced to endure the blows and rough speech of her husband, she realized the power of wealth and the joy of freedom.

It rested with her to make Runow happy above all other men. And she saw that the anger trickled from her heart like sand from an hour-glass. To compel one's self to nourish ill-

will is harder than to catch wind with a fishing-net.

So she played two notes on the string that was called Runow, and Simen responded with a thousand, and she added a greeting to the letter.

Another year Simen begged for permission to go to Runow and to find out whether he were happy and how he ruled the island and his own mind.

When he returned home he talked ceaselessly to her of all that he had seen and heard, only keeping silence with regard to Kaina; why, he himself did not know.

He must describe the appearance of the island and the steep dunes, that, like pointed battlements, shielded it against the fury of the sea. He must describe Klitgaard and the green elm-trees.

Still a winter passed and yet another.

East of Klitgaard lay two grey huts like floating hillocks of sea-weed. In one of them lived Arnlys of Iceland with Gefen; but Gefen was dull and heavy, whilst her blood was like the hot geysers of her native isle. Hot and hasty she was and his stupid laziness disgusted her. That she might not continually breathe the same air as him she made a hole in the roof of the hut and one in the wall, and when she did not lie looking up to the free sky she lay by the hole in the wall and peeped out towards Tarben's hut.

The five children mocked at the grumbling father and hopped like lambs about the lively mother. She lavished caresses upon them and kissed their ears, and rolled about in the sand with them, and boiled all the birds' eggs they found. She took them in her arms and played with them.

But fourteen paces away lay the hut where Tarben lived with his gentle Maja. Maja had

no children, and whenever she heard Arnlys' children laughing she fretted so much that she withered in the place where fresh shoots should have sprung out.

Their eyes met during many days and it came about that Arnlys and Tarben cared only to live for one another. But Arnlys' husband and Tarben's wife had also eyes, and these must be blinded.

Tarben was fond of the five children because they made Arnlys gay and happy—and they, or the eldest of them, helped to urge her to an evil deed. She hesitated, hoping that death might remove the superfluous; she would rather have caressed Tarben with hands that were not sticky with blood. But Maja became pregnant, and her joy awakened a wild fury in Arnlys' soul.

If Tarben would not listen to her she would leave the country and return to Iceland and never see him again. He gave way, and they agreed that, at the same hour, when the sun was high overhead, they would do the deed that would leave them henceforth in peace with one another.

Arnlys enticed Gefen into a sack. He was to try whether it were large enough to creep into in the cold of winter. Laughingly she tied the sack over his head, seized the mussel-knife and stabbed him until he was quiet.

Tarben heard the cries, but he shrank from killing the gentle Maja who had just fallen into her noonday sleep. Still, he knew what Arnlys' vows meant, and at last he threw himself upon Maja with the whole weight of his body.

She gasped aloud for air, but he did not move; then there was a rattling in her throat, and he felt how Death crept over her body from her head to her heels. But he had killed two, and Arnlys only one, and he was seized with terror.

He listened for Arnlys' voice; all around was silent, in the hut, beneath the sky, even the sea was still. Maja lay there with open mouth, there was no trace of violence. Somewhat soothed he stepped to the door, seeking Arnlys, but he dared not take the fourteen paces to her hut.

Whenever he had asked her, "What shall we do with the bodies afterwards?" she had

answered, "First the deed; then everything will arrange itself." He dared not cross the threshold and he dared not return to look at Maja's open mouth.

As he stood there in the silence, Kaina came creeping through the heather. A butterfly flew before her and took the path between the huts. Tarben knew Kaina and had often seen her by the fires when there was singing at the salt-pans south of Klitgaard. Now she came in the hour of need and he begged her to run across to Arnlys' hut, but not to enter nor to look through the hole in the wall, only to call Arnlys to Tarben.

She pointed with one finger towards Arnlys and another to Tarben; she had understood.

Over by the hut she called, "Arnlys to Tarben —Arnlys to Tarben!" but as no one answered she went nearer, sprang upon the loose pieces of turf, and peeped in. But before Arnlys could call to her she ran away frightened and screaming through the heather, straight to Runow.

Arnlys had at that moment been in the act of smearing the lips of her children with blood

from Gefen's wounds as a seal of silence that must never be broken. And as there was no tenderness for their father in their hearts they had looked on in silence and without blenching.

Runow was not inclined to go himself and see whether Kaina's words were true, but he sent the bailiff's man and the constable, and a third, Vige Laem, the warder of the prison, who happened at that moment to be guarding a vacant cell.

Tarben and Arnlys were taken in the midst of their love-making and before even the bodies had been disposed of.

At the end of the path leading southwards from Klitgaard lay the prison. A governor who had been there before Runow's time had been unwilling to have his children disturbed at night by the clanking of the chains against his walls. Therefore, he had built a prison-cell at his own cost and had it well secured with iron and tough oak. A man could stand upright in it. Three rings were fastened to the walls, to each was welded a chain. If many thieves or perpetrators of outrage awaited trial together they were locked into the dark room in the garret at Klitgaard.

Before the spy-holes were iron bars, red with rust. Any one might spit into the prisoner's eyes and vent their spleen upon him. He was in no way protected. There was a spy-hole to the north, one to the south, one to the east, and another to the west. If chill winds were blowing, the prisoners bent double in their chains

and let them blow over their backs, but in the cold of the winter days the ankle-rings and hand-irons were glowing hot.

The warder, at this time Vige Laem, who answered for the prisoners with his life, lived twenty paces away; but loved his bench and his hearth-fire too well to trouble them, save that he shortened the fetters of those who danced and sprang about in their chains.

Here Arnlys and Tarben were shut up. Whoever looked through the spy-hole by day saw them always eye to eye and lip to lip. Arnlys sang to Tarben whilst outside the five children howled and screamed for their beloved mother. But Tarben was dearer to her than the five. She did not fear hell, for she knew that Tarben would follow her through death and judgment into the terrible pains of damnation. But those who were ashamed to look during the day, and who spied at night, saw worse. And Vige Laem knew it, but he did not shorten the chains.

The case was so clear that it was unnecessary to postpone it. Any attempt to obtain grace from the chapter-house was superfluous.

The governor of Laesö had only to sign the sentence according to which they were to lose first their hands and then their heads. If it could have been done in the darkness without his knowledge, without his presence, he would have set his name to it as easily as he snapped his fingers in the air, but when once the verdict was sealed the governor must himself follow the cart to the place of execution, himself hear the sentence read, and see the axe fall with his own eyes.

The executioner was old, and his hands trembled.

Runow could not readily make up his mind to despatch to the grey kingdom of shadows two people who burned with so fierce a love for one another.

He took the pen in his hand, let it fall again, and stared at the row of letters until they danced and swam before his eyes. From the black lines of the parchment he saw blood filter and from the corners of the room he heard the cry that would be stifled ere it broke from the throat. Once more he took the pen and let it fall. His

fingers were limp and his hand as thick as a sponge full of water.

In addition to this Arnlys' children came day and night begging beseechingly for the life of their dear mother. He could hardly rest at night, for he heard their despair beneath his walls, and heard the elder children trying to comfort the little ones. But justice was justice, and even lesser crimes were atoned for with worse punishments than this.

Runow took the paper into his chamber. Here sat Kaina, writing on a tablet.

He sat down beside her.

"Kaina—lay thy hand on mine, firmly, without trembling, and now at once!"

She looked up at him without understanding, but she did as she was bidden. Then he wrote his name.

He read the sentence over to her and explained what she could not understand in the language of the law. But Kaina continued to look at her hand, and then she hid it under her neckerchief.

On the evening before the two were executed

Runow sent to ask them whether they had any special wish—for he hoped that Arnlys would give her children into his protection, and believed that she would desire to have them with her during her last night.

But Tarben begged that he and Arnlys might spend it without their fetters, and Arnlys begged that Tarben might be executed first, and that she might hold his head in her hands ere it was cut off.

Although this was a double wish, Runow granted it, and he sent them wine by Vige Laem that their sleep might be sound, if not calm.

But when the morning came it seemed to Tarben that the sun was white and the whole sky red as flowing blood, and his lips grew chilled on Arnlys' lips; his fingers could not grasp hers; his arms hung limply at his sides and his head sank on his breast. He had to be carried to the cart by force, but Arnlys lifted him out in her strong arms. Then he begged in senseless terror that Arnlys might be executed first so that he could gain a second of time.

Then her courage, too, failed her, for she had

believed that death would be as the intoxicating passion of the night. But she would not be weak. She turned her eyes away from him—now she heard the five children cry and wail. She stopped her ears with her fingers until the executioner seized her arms and severed them from her body.

Runow had returned home, ill at ease, with the remembrance of Arnlys and Tarben, and filled with remorse at the thought of the children who were now wandering homeless.

From the watchman's room came noisy singing, a noble carouse was in progress in honour of the sinners' journey to hell.

Between whiles he heard the windlass of the well creak and creak as if some one were drawing up water without cess, but old Ture was overhead in the loft turning apples, and the servants were sleeping their midday sleep. He went to see what it was. By the well stood Kaina, turning the heavy windlass so that her face was red with the exertion. Whenever the bucket rose over the wall of the well she tilted it over her right hand.

Then Runow grew angry. He got out through the window and knocked the bucket out of her hand, so that it fell from the hook and into the well. He pulled her in by the wrist; she must answer his questions, and tell him what was evil in a just sentence and why she was behaving like a woman in labour.

But Kaina could say nothing. The cold, damp hands were tightly folded and the water dripped down from her clothes. Runow left her standing there and went out himself.

So she was rebellious and self-righteous and would not comprehend—or was it that she lacked understanding? She should not make mock of him before every one—rather than that he would remain alone. Aye, far rather!

He went to Germund's hut and arranged with him and old Idel that they should take Kaina to live with them now that she was a maiden and could scarcely continue to dwell under his roof without awakening remark. They agreed willingly, and it was settled that it would be best to wait a month that she might prepare herself for the change.

So the matter was arranged, but immediately after Runow regretted it. He should have acted with forbearance and not in violent anger. She was soft as the lightest breath of air. It was not she who would tempt him. In her veins flowed no fire. And in all the wide world she had only him and him alone.

But now he had spoken with Germund and it was best that Kaina should know of it at once.

The door of her chamber was fastened. Yes, that he knew. Yet never did the darkness fall but he stood before it, begging her to tell him if she were still angry. And never did she shoot back the bolt, but he took her in his arms and held her there and would not let her go.

Ture, the old gnarled fellow who, whilst the winter lasted, went in and out of all the rooms at Klitgaard with wood and bellows, had seen a good deal.

True, the huzzy was no longer in the house, but in the snow before the turret-door he found her footprints, and also in the freshly-strewn sand of the Governor's chamber.

But if any one asked him what he had seen, were it watchman or common folk, his mouth was closed with two-inch spikes. Calmly he smoothed the bed and sniffed at the red cushion that smelled of sweet musk.

Yet he heard well enough how the pair passed, with chatter and talk, those hours which the Lord Himself had measured out for deep and snoring slumber. For Ture lay in the loft over the room, and if the trap-door stood open to the sky he heard words and sounds of love as well. It was easy enough to see that the huzzy came

from the ends of the earth whither sailed the masted ships, for she talked of the stars as if they were beasts with wings, or other ungodly human shapes.

Once it happened that he stretched his head over the edge of the trap-door, and then he saw the huzzy standing in the middle of the floor, weeping in the moonlight as if her nose were smeared with onions—but the governor kneeled before her on his bare knees and prayed to her as the pastor prayed before the altar on high festivals. Luckily Ture drew back his head before either of them had become aware of it, and thenceforth he sprinkled whey plentifully before the bed that the magic which no doubt hung about the huzzy might not harm his gracious master.

Only to Arnlys' children did he communicate something of his knowledge.

In the hut of Germund, the net-weaver, Kaina sat awaiting the last hours of the day that it might soon be evening and night. The sun might more easily penetrate closed eyelids than the hole in the roof that Germund had stopped with

skins against wind and weather. The room was filled with smoke.

But Kaina did not look for the sun. Her eyes sought the floor where Germund's feet moved like wounded beasts amongst the ashes, and where his nets lay strewn about. He knotted them peacefully whilst he shivered with cold, for he was blind as the hen upon his right shoulder. But Idel turned the spinning-wheel and span. The threads broke more easily than her speech. As she chattered her loose tusks rattled like the shuttle of the weaving-stool. Now and then she pushed the glowing peat with her foot so that it flamed up and sent the ashes flying high over the soup-kettle.

Under the beams of the roof hanging fish blew hither and thither in every draught, like linen on a bleaching-line.

If Germund's fumbling fingers could not loosen the knots of the yarn he gave it to Kaina, who unfastened them without a word. And Idel made her hold the mug out of which Germund sipped his beer, and she had to free the fish from

bones and gills before Germund's toothless jaws crushed them.

At the sixth hour after noon the old people crept beneath the skins under which Kaina laid a little sack of herbs to ward off pains; she placed the cat against the soles of Germund's feet to keep the warmth in them, and set the hen upon the pillow. Then she raked the ashes over the embers and sat awaiting the hour when Runow would knock upon the beams and summon her to him.

Her thoughts left her no rest. The nights seemed endless when Runow did not call her, and she believed that the day would never come. To him she was a coaxing kitten with soft paws and sharp claws, so charmingly wild that no reason could bridle her, yet obedient and tender. Away from him she felt nothing but fear. It was awakening jealousy.

Runow had so often murmured Brigitte's name in his dreams that Kaina at length asked him what it was, and he swore that it was a flower in the woods of Lünegaard far away from Laesö.

She was silent for a while, but then asked again. Her examination became a torment. He must ever be careful and on his guard against the questions over which she brooded night after night.

Soon she no longer spent her days in Germund's hut. Runow felt himself unsafe. From behind, from before, she came creeping upon him, always meek and always sad. She tracked his path—he could only move in the circle that her watchfulness drew about him.

When she shut her eyes she could see all that her mind desired, all that she had known and lived through with her mother long ago. What did Runow see when he closed his? What did his dreams whisper to him? with what were his thoughts occupied during the hours that she spent in Germund's hut?

But she could not look into his heart. Between his soul and hers was an abyss that sensual love could never bridge over.

During all this time Jacob was earning bread and fame in the city of Bremen. He lived in the house of the baker, Johann Nimmergut, in the Trinnengasse, in an attic wherein black meal-dust flew about amongst cockroaches and crickets. The apprentices stamped up and down in the sticky dough, coughing and cursing; the housewife scolded in the kitchen below, the rats fought in the gutter. If there were an interval of silence one heard the death-watch ticking in the wall.

But to Jacob all this was as it should be. The world was nothing but misery, he himself was miserable.

He carefully stopped all the holes in the walls with cotton-wool and rags to secure himself from curious eyes.

Under the bull's-eye window stood a trunk covered with red leather, and with a heavy lock. It came from Seven-Isles. Here he would sit

in his hours of idleness, looking over the wall at the brothers in the garden of the cloister opposite.

Brown cowls flapped against their thin legs, the lean, restless hands clasped fat breviaries. In bodily misery, in mental anguish, they went about with whining lips and long faces—their mournful eyes glanced after every cloud, after every leaf that the wind carried over to them. Others shovelled earth about the vegetables in the garden, bowed their necks and rooted up the weeds that the sun had brought forth. The garden-paths were worn smooth as mirrors by their dragging feet.

At the end of the garden was the back of a house which the cloister, although it offered a high price, had not been able to purchase. Here lived three stout women who jested and laughed all day and all night. But when the brothers approached the walls their steps faltered and they clasped their breviaries more firmly.

When Jacob had looked until he was tired he would open the fat-bellied trunk and shake out the few treasures of clothes, weapons, and bright

ribbons that he had collected. But he first of all shot the bolt of the door and the shutter of the bull's-eye, and lighted a candle.

Then he would adorn himself with one jerkin over another, chains and sashes in all directions, and rings on all his five fingers. In this array he puffed himself out like a great peacock. No maiden loved her white skin so well as he loved the finery that helped him to hide his body. His senses glowed whenever his hand touched velvet, or the precious stones of his scabbard shone before his eyes.

Yet he thought with shame of the early years at Utrecht when he had decked himself out with every checquered silk that he could get hold of, and made himself the butt of all and especially of Runow.

Since then he had grown to understand that fine clothes only fit straight bodies, and he adorned himself merely for his own benefit when he was alone. But there in Johann Nimmergut's chamber he danced French dances with imaginary ladies, kneeled in the dust before them and offered them incense—then he would brush

the dust from his costly clothes, pick off straws and flakes, and dress himself once more in his black, worn-out mantle.

He knew his own crooked shadow.

Johann Nimmergut gave him as much bread as he could eat, and the apprentices procured for him the brew of the house and milk, because he lanced their abscesses and his presence in the house was an honour. The half of his income he gave to the old people of the town and the hospitals for poor, illegitimate children.

Thus did Jacob.

And he saved and economized as if he had been van Devil's own son. All that he earned of gold and clinking coin he divided into two parts; for the one he purchased favour and good repute, the other he hid away in his trunk.

Kind words and friendly treatment were a necessity of life to him, he himself was a spendthrift in them.

But to what end he saved he did not know. It seemed to him that gold possessed a power like healthy life-blood, and that some day it would double the strength of his years.

He would remain with a dying man throughout whole nights, and murmur heavenly prayers with him. He could seem contented when the air of the sick-room was thick with suffocating odours. He did not know impatience. He wept with those whose tears flowed and laughed with the happy.

No woman was able to torment him. For Runow alone dwelt in his heart, and only Runow. He permitted him everything and grudged him everything. If Runow were glad he hated the cause of this gladness because it was not himself.

Old Simen was fond of him and wrote often of what had taken place and of his hopes. Thus Jacob knew that Brigitte had brooded over her anger, and that Runow was caged like a beast on sandy Laesö. But no one summoned him—no one wanted him.

Many a good goose-quill did he break in writing to Simen. At one moment he looked down upon him in contempt because he ate Brigitte's bread of charity, at another he praised and blessed him for every kind word and every scrap

of news from Lünegaard and Laesö; at one moment he boasted and showed off, at another he was tender as a child, and again so shameless that Simen washed the hands that had touched so uncleanly a letter.

But when Simen had visited Runow at Laesö and there heard only friendly words concerning Jacob he wrote at once to tell him so, and Jacob's fingers grew moist.

If there were any possibility that Runow would receive him under his roof he certainly would not hesitate, but would quit Bremen instantly. He considered for a long time how he should act, and months passed before he made up his mind to write to Runow. The letter was written cunningly and cleverly, composed of memories of childhood. He did not mention Brigitte, but only begged that Runow would allow him, as his faithful brother, to tread the same soil and breathe the same air as himself. The answer soon came back.

"For God's sake, come, dear brother, and share my days. I have forgotten what has been before.

The present is nothing. Nothing can happen. I am weary, weary."

At the end of the letter was written, "A stranded sailor was thrown upon a desert island. He trained up an ape, for he longed for a companion. He dressed it as a man and tried to teach it to speak. Thus did I, but the ape did not learn to speak, and I am alone on the desert island."

Jacob had five new iron bands set on the trunk from Seven-Isles, occupied himself for five days in collecting the money that the citizens owed him, and then travelled northwards. At Fladstrand he hired a boat to himself that not a day nor an hour might be wasted. He pomaded his hair with scented oil and adorned himself like a bride who goes to meet her bridegroom.

Close by Laesö he looked over the edge of the ship down into the mirror of the water and saw his crooked shadow; angrily he tore the fine clothes from his body, threw them into the water, and once more put on his mantle. The sailors thought him mad that he should throw into the sea gold-embroidered festal garments.

He met Runow whilst he was still far from Klitgaard. The brothers kissed each other ir greeting.

And they talked together without cess, for there was something that neither would speak of, and yet in the first pause it must be named.

Runow showed Jacob the wood in the northern part of the island, the salt-pans in the south—hidden in thick smoke—showed him the seven stout elms that grew on the unfruitful soil, and in the west the strip of green grass with three lean cows, and the dyke that surrounded Klitgaard, high in parts and low in others.

Jacob asked whether the women of the island were pleasing. Runow answered that they were pale as sand-grass and full of freckles as a flounder.

* * * * * * * *

Kaina sat in the hut in restless longing. Then one evening she went, of her own accord, to Klitgaard and crept through the turret-door into the house. Runow heard her and came out. Alarmed, he thrust her into the back chamber where he was wont to do his accounts.

Thence she heard him talking to a stranger with tender words, and heard them call each other "brother."

All became silent. For a long while she stood alone, forgotten. In the middle of the night she ventured to open the door. She heard double breathing from Runow's bed and from her own little one. Then she rushed to the railing and woke Runow out of his sleep.

Runow passed his hand over his brow. He had forgotten Kaina now that his dear brother was come and slept in her bed. But Kaina must remain with Germund until he summoned her.

Runow was weary and fell asleep as they chatted.

There was much talk about the brother. Idel could not cease speaking of him. He took out blind people's eyes and stuck balls of fat in their places that looked just like eyes. He stroked lame women under their knee-joints so that they sprang about like hares over ploughed fields—aye, when Gunild Kaefer got an ulcer that burned like hell he blew through the eye of a needle on to it, and Gunild was cured in the same

moment. He spoke as softly as a mouse. And he kept all his secret art in his hump-back.

But Kaina hated the brother, and when he entered the hut and began to chat she took on a sour and obstinate look and would not say a word.

He was repugnant to her, simply repugnant.

Simen had warned Runow that Brigitte would come some day—and since then he had watched every east wind lest it should bring her.

There were still moments when he loved Kaina dearly, but even in her arms he felt no rest, he was forced to listen for Brigitte's coming. And his longing was so great that he could not lock it up in his own heart.

Then he told Kaina about Brigitte.

During whole nights he would speak of her, and Kaina begged him not to be silent. Only she wondered why she felt so tired and so cold. She murmured his words after him.

Idel had seen by her breasts that she was pregnant, but Runow felt no joy over the news and soon forgot it.

Now at last Kaina understood that she was not wanted, and she hid herself in the hut with Germund and Idel.

Often she asked whether it hurt to die, and

whether death came in the day or in the night. Or she asked whether souls could die. "For my soul is so sick, so sick!"

But no one must speak Runow's name, she kept it off with both her hands.

That name should be surrounded with silence, utter silence. She feared lest her mournful thoughts should twine themselves about him and injure him. She wept no more now.

She who was named Brigitte had always dwelt in his heart. Now she knew that it was so.

But if Runow came at times to the hut and summoned her out, she had to follow him, however much it hurt her. Afterwards she wiped her lips—he had thought of Brigitte, his caresses should be effaced.

And in her body dwelled the new little existence.

* * * * * * * *

Kaina fled from Germund's hut. In the sand-hollow under the bell, by the ruins of the church, she hid herself until the child should be born.

Hither there came no light or sound from the world. Her body rested in a waking sleep, she

felt no pain and no joy. The whole day long she sat and scratched with her nail on the metal so that it sang.

Sometimes she was seized with longing to wander on until she found the great river and eternal peace; but she was too weary. If at night she left the hollow to look at the stars, her eyes began to shed tears. The cry of the wild birds of prey filled the darkness, and they struck her face with their hard wings. Then she became aware of her sick soul and crept once more under the bell.

Daily, at the hour of twilight, two careful hands thrust under the bell a bowl of food. They were not Idel's withered hands, nor Runow's—she would have known these by their perfume—they were two hands that did not seek hers, but drew back noiselessly, to come again at the following twilight hour. Once it happened that they touched her face, and a perfume came to her that was like the smell of crushed willow-boughs. Food was distasteful to her, yet if she left it uneaten the child in her womb became

restless, and its little hands seemed to press upon her heart.

It must be Idel who sent the food, for no one but Idel knew that she was in the sand-hollow. Idel had herself advised Kaina to fly. For it had come about that Germund's hut resembled an open field where people came and went without seeking anything, but only to gather about Kaina and see the condition of her body, and to mock at her.

Therefore she had fled—to find peace.

When once Brigitte had formed her resolution she no longer hesitated. Time will fly, death will bring counsel, she thought, and plucked out the white hairs that had grown since she last saw Runow. Every little pain it gave was sweet to her. When her hair had resumed its colour once more it seemed to her that she had won back the years.

She plucked all the climbing roses of the garden and shook them into her bath, and called herself a fool for having waited so long. And as she lay in her bath she summoned her waiting-women and bade them pluck jasmin and lilies—for now time and anger and longing were banished from body and thoughts.

And she asked, "Could you tell from my skin that as many years have passed over me as there are weeks between Trinity and Advent?"

Only two coachmen conducted her across Jutland.

She was shaken over the hard hollows of the hills, and over the rough stones of the roads, she was shaken up there in the north where the wheels sank into the soil and the country resembled a church-yard of sand-hillocks. But she lay in her carriage, sang to herself, and laughed until the tears stood in her eyes, and chattered as if she were talking with Runow. Often she slept and laughed in her sleep. If they passed a stream she must descend and drink out of the hollow of her hand. In the carriage she looked at her face in a mirror at every moment.

For a while she was sick during that rough journey to Laesö-land; but when she reached it she was as sound as ever, and left her men behind her and would find the way alone. It mattered not how far she might have to go. Her blood would run, her heart beat, her soul long and her foot tread until she came to Runow.

The land seemed strange to her eyes. No boundaries cut it into fields, no road bordered with poplars wound along from north to south; nothing separated the good from the bad soil. The sand moved under her feet like ants, it was

hard to walk. The wiry heather wound itself about her ankles and held fast the fur-edged hem of her robe.

Strong and yet soft did she become at sight of the empty flats. It was hot under the glowing twilit sky, where day and night were struggling together, where the last rays of the sun flamed, and over which the shadows crept—so hot that she loosened her hood and let her hair stream about her.

The clasp hung down from her waist and knocked with a ringing sound against her knees as she went. She was not in the habit of wearing jewels, but for this meeting with Runow she had adorned herself with the bridal-gold of Mistress Merthe Bölle. She longed for him; it did not occur to her that there might be any obstacle in the way.

Here on the storm-beaten island day after day would fly past—but the nights should be long winter nights, every one of them.

She knew that there existed women who, in morbid longing, kiss their lips sore on the greedy

mouths of many men—but this she did not understand. Only Runow, only the one, only him.

She paused where she was and cried her hope into the twilight like a powerful bird that feels the pressure of the air beneath its wings.

Whether the sea closed over her, whether the sky fell upon her, strewing over her its burning stars—nothing could assail her under Runow's care. For his pleasure was her body formed—she laughed and thought of her industry at the embroidery-frame.

Soon she was no longer alone. Figures rose about her. Like the dead from their graves they rose from the earth, the ugly, grey people. They made their way through the heather with awkward gait and hanging heads. They exchanged no intelligible words with one another, but men, women, and children bleated, bellowed and gaped. Not one lifted his brow to be blessed by the last rays of the sun, or turned to watch the darkness of night that raced upon them from the east.

Brigitte went on her uncertain way with confident steps. She was hungry. The darkness

lay thick over the island, the roll of the sea came to her ears, high trees sighed. The sharp sickle of the moon mowed through the clouds that were white as cotton-grass.

She passed by low huts from which the fetid odour oozed out through plank and beam. She stumbled against a willow-stump and stood right in front of the edge of the wood. The ground was damp and a strong smell smote her nostrils.

She turned and approached one of the huts. The latch shone, white smoke rose from the turf-roof. She heard distinctly the breathing of two people. It was Germund's hut.

Late in the night she reached Klitgaard, counted the windows, the clay-holes, and the thick-boled elms.

She pushed the door open and went through all the rooms until she found Runow.

Brigitte had followed her longing until she had reached her goal.

Runow might have spared himself all words of remorse, she cared not a whit for them. The blood sang in her veins and she heard only that.

They awoke at noon. Their hands had rested

in each other's. Old Ture stared at them out of a corner. The sun was high above Klitgaard—and the fine clothes were strewed about all over the room.

But Brigitte begged for fried bacon, she called from the bed that she was nearly dead with hunger. Then Ture crept away.

The whole day long Runow rubbed his eyes and looked at Brigitte. She was there. Her laughter tickled his ears whether she spoke of sad or joyful things.

Jacob could not understand their joy. He said that, as the marriage had been declared null and void, the matter must first be put right.

Aye, that was worth while! Her three uncles Lindenow, each bonier and more disagreeable than the other, must first be won over, for they were her guardians. Then the king, who had enough to do with his kingdom, and then the church and all the clergy.

"Thou art stupid, Jacob, stupid, and not at all sensible—see here!" She drew out the decree of invalidity, struck fire with flint and tinder-box and held the writing to it.

"Thy right hand, my husband!" Runow stretched it out, uncertain what was about to happen.

Swiftly she pressed the burning paper together and laid it in the hollow of his hand.

She seized his wrist and held it fast. The wax melted in the palm, the letter burned to ashes. Runow would have cried out, but he controlled himself. Directly after he went out and plunged the hand into cold water—Brigitte saw it from the window.

They finally agreed to follow Jacob's advice, which was good and sound. When the wind changed again Brigitte should return to Lünegaard, and go to her kinsmen and to the king to arrange for another marriage. For if she remained with Runow without this it might injure him and still more his children.

Runow would have preferred to bid farewell to his office and to the island, and to have gone with her at once, but she would not hear of it.

For seven years he had lived there quite alone, for seven years she would share with him the

stillness of the island, then they would live at Lünegaard for the rest of their lives.

She scarcely thought to return before the spring, for her mission would occupy time; besides, Simen must have her counsel as to the manor and the crops for the coming year.

As many candles shone at Klitgaard as the tables had spikes to fasten them on and the walls holders to thrust them into. The wind had changed and to-morrow Brigitte was to start out.

Now she was in haste to get away. She showed them, laughingly, how lightly she could turn her tongue to a hundred different tones and manners of speech. Each of the crabbed kinsmen must be won over by every means in her power, by coaxing, by coldness, by cunning, by presents. Everything should go smoothly and well.

Meanwhile, she sat beside Runow and played with his hands and called them idle. They were whiter and softer than hers. But Brigitte herself took care of the forty beehives at Lünegaard, and herself smoked out the bees every autumn. That gave her stings and freckles and sunburn.

She called Jacob, jestingly, a musk-rat decked out for a wedding, on account of his sweet-smelling, many-coloured clothes.

He looked angry. He had warned Runow that the time was come when Kaina must bring forth her child, but had been rebuffed; whilst Brigitte was under his roof only one name might be pronounced, and that was hers.

At Klitgaard and in Runow's chamber Kaina bore her child.

When the first pains racked her body she was lying under the bell. She screamed, and the screams grew and rang against the metal walls, grew and echoed back like splitting blows against her forehead, drove red-hot wedges into her ears. It was as if the walls of the bell were closing together about her. Every breath sounded like a cry.

When she was silent the child, too, was paralyzed by the terror in her blood; it did not move, did not struggle towards life.

At last she managed to crawl out, with clammy skin, weary to death, full of fear for the living being who commanded her body and was itself a body, though as yet invisible. The pure air lent her strength. Soon she began to creep on

hands and knees through the silent night towards Klitgaard.

Lights shone from all the windows. Laughter rang through the house.

As she hesitated, uncertain, the pains began once more. The child struggled angrily for release. She entered through the open turret-door.

And she bore the child without a sound. It, too, made no sound; every drop of blood in her had warned it to be still.

When once Runow had seen it she would get up and go with it to the great river. She would dip her forehead in the water, amongst blossoms the child should float away through all the rivers, across all the seas—

She fell asleep.

Runow's unrest drove him out of the room away from Jacob and Brigitte. On the threshold he felt that Kaina was there, and he saw her and by her the little babe.

He kneeled down beside her, kissed her hands, wept—and drove her away with soft, despondent words. For Brigitte of Lünegaard was come, and she must know nothing, nothing at all. But

when Brigitte slept he would come to Kaina and remain with her and her child.

She knew that he was lying.

Wearily she rose from the couch and crept obediently out into the night with her little one. She seated herself on a stone by the pond beside the house, uncertain what to do. She tore strips from her dress and wrapped them about the babe that the chill of the night might not harm it.

* * * * * * * *

Wax candles burned in Runow's chamber, twelve by twelve, in a wide circle. He had removed every trace of Kaina with his own hands and now he awaited Brigitte.

The lights burned crookedly, wax dropped from them continually.

"The candles prophesy ill, every one of them is weeping!" She would have extinguished them, but Runow would not let her. He must have light that he might see her and know that she was with him.

Brigitte took the red silk cushion and held it against her cheek. "It is as soft as a woman's hair, so it seems to me. Tell me, Runow, what

is the name of the woman who sewed it for thy dreams? Was it that maid in Holland?"

As he made no answer she asked no more concerning it. She showered her caresses upon him and talked into his mouth so that her words sounded like the cooing of doves. They fell asleep as blissfully as if this night were the last that was given them to live and love.

Kaina lifted the child towards the setting moon, towards the rising sun, and then pushed it softly far out into the pond.

Startled out of their lazy sleep the carp swam towards it in dense shoals, opening their jaws and snapping at its little living fingers.

Kaina saw this with horror, but she hastened away. For the child must not find its path to the eternal peace pursued by weeping and lamentation.

As she fled past Klitgaard she struck her nose against an unseen post and cried out, but ran on.

Brigitte awoke and asked, "Who was that who cried?"

Runow was silent that his voice might not betray him. Again she put her question, seizing him by the arm, and now he answered as if out of heavy slumber, "I heard nothing!"

She was not so easily satisfied, but wrapped her cloak about her nakedness and went out into

the white twilight. Between two elms she saw the water of the pond move. In one place the fish were collected in a shoal. The air was so still that she could hear their greedy snapping. They shot to and fro. When the sun mounted higher she distinguished the child. It looked as if it were fleeing before the rapacious fish from the one shore to the other.

She was seized with fury against the being who had thrown so helpless a creature of God into the filthy water. She threw back her mantle, waded out, beat off the fish with her large hands and took the child, but slipped again and again in the mud and could scarcely reach the shore.

Once more she wrapped her cloak about her and hid the child against her warm bosom. Runow was at the window, his lower lip hanging. She held it out to him, not noticing his horror.

"See, Runow, see this little thing, but take it carefully! I pulled it out of the pond and I am all wet."

He took it in his hands. Twice he opened his lips, but he could not speak. Then he fell forward on his face.

She had not held Runow to be so weak, although somewhat cowardly. She shivered under the cloak and shook him softly, but the womanish fainting-fit lasted some time and he lay unconscious on the floor. She drew a deep breath and, collecting all her strength, lifted him with difficulty on to the bed. He still held the child fast.

Then she dried her body and dressed herself. When she looked round at him he was crouching at the end of the bed farthest from the child.

She could not help pitying him. "Thou must be weak indeed if so pitiful a thing can rob thee of thy strength. I could almost believe that thou hadst never seen a corpse before. But hasten and call out thy lazy fellows that they may discover who has borne this night, that the punishment of her sin may follow in its footsteps. My hands would gladly seize the filthy, good-for-nothing woman—and I wish with all my heart that her eyes may be thrust out before she loses her life!"

She was so indignant that she herself awakened the watchman and the bailiff from their sleep and led them to Runow. She gave one order, he

another, for he must first collect his thoughts; but before an hour had passed men were searching in all directions. Old Karen Maja who had long, fine fingers and who helped to loosen infants from their mothers, went with them—she should see by the women's breasts which of them had recently borne.

Brigitte fetched a little red trough in which she laid the child, covering it over with a kerchief. Shortly after she brought the law-books that Runow might show her what punishment could be dealt out for so evil a deed as the killing of a tiny, new-born creature.

There was a scratching at the door. Arnlys' little girl entered and said, in a low voice, as though frightened at her own errand, "She, Kaina, is lying out there and scooping out the pond, and she is crying that the fish have eaten a little child who crept out of her body!"

Brigitte rose hurriedly, seized the trough and dragged Runow out with her. By the pond sat Kaina, scooping up the water with her hands.

Brigitte dropped the trough beside her; "Does she recognize her evil deed?"

Kaina seized the child, pushed back her chemise and laid the little corpse against her breast, from which the milk oozed.

She looked up and asked, softly, "Are you she who is called Brigitte of Lünegaard?" And without awaiting a reply she said, again: "But you slept every night upon my hair—every night you slept upon my hair!"

Brigitte bent over her and asked her, sharply, "Who slept upon thy hair?"

Kaina was silent, and Runow did not move.

Whilst Brigitte ran to fetch Vige Laem, Runow must keep watch over Kaina, but she did not speak to him. Only she shuddered as if the chill of the little body pierced through her breast to bone and marrow.

Kaina was conducted to the prison-cell, but she might not keep the child with her. It must remain at Klitgaard until the trial was ended.

Before Brigitte went on board she made Runow promise to send her long and frequent letters and to tell her of the trial and the sentence. Over the rail of the ship she gave him her hands, and he touched them with his cold lips and held

them fast, and went out into the water, unable to let her go.

"Thou, Brigitte, art my only strength for good and evil."

She laughed and tore herself away from him, and wept.

The friends of Arnlys and the kinsmen of Tarben kept watch under the prison walls. It was whispered amongst them that the governor was seeking a means to send the huzzy away by ship; but that should not be, even though the day's work and the night's rest must be sacrificed to prevent it. Those who at other times could not agree as to white and black, now yielded amiably and divided time and watches between them, that sentries might always be pacing the path.

Kaina had the cell to herself. She was not fettered. The governor insisted that a sick woman should not be fastened, and still less weighted with iron. In the beginning she stood and looked out into the clear air, but from all the spy-holes staring, evil eyes were watching her and did not leave her face.

After that she crouched upon the ground where no one could reach her; but whenever she looked up she saw again the watching eyes.

For the most part she hid her face in her lap so that it was dark and quiet about her. The blood sang in her ears as if she were sitting beside the sea or under the big-sounding bell. Then she could dream peacefully of the little child and imagine that it still rested under her heart, or that it was creeping out of her body—but if she woke and tried to grasp it she caught at empty air.

At night, when the shadows glided in at one spy-hole, out at another, over the walls and the floor, over her face and hands, her heart grew terrified. The silent night bore to her listening ears a thousand noises. She heard the fish snapping in the pond. Only one wish filled her, and nothing more for herself—that they might give her back her little child.

She gazed at her empty hands that had once held it. It seemed to her that she could hear it crying in every corner, and she crept round the cell to reach it, tapped on the walls and on the floor, everywhere. The child was not there.

Outside in the warm summer night some one

lay and snored, there was always some one there, but he slept lightly.

Days and weeks passed, and still she had not been summoned to trial, still the trough with the child stood at Klitgaard; but in the turret that Runow did not enter. Vige Laem began to wonder. Was the huzzy to remain on there for nothing, and be a burden to him who must feed and watch her?

Restlessly Runow wandered to and fro and waited. He would have Kaina brought before him when the time came, and would ask her name and her country, and the name of the man who had made her a mother. When the time came.

He knew Kaina, and knew that in the presence of others she would be silent despite force and threats. And he and she should not be left alone.

But when Vige Laem sent word to know whether he should not set a pair of small iron links upon her legs that she might not escape before her trial and get him into trouble or even lose him his office, Runow saw that he must act.

Any one who would bear witness would be

summoned to Klitgaard, the hall could be cleared out if there were not room enough, and all statements would be believed. And before all these eyes, before all these evil tongues, Kaina would stand without one helping hand stretched out to her!

It must be, for there was no way out. Afterwards there would be time enough for flight.

But whenever he thought of Kaina she seemed to him like the little, helpless child amongst the swarm of greedy fish. He banished the thought from his mind.

Jacob gave him counsel, which he instantly followed.

He sent an urgent message to the mainland with a letter to the lords of the chapter-house, stating that the great difficulty of the case obliged him to demand an extra judge that a just sentence might be obtained more speedily. The same boat carried a message to the governor of Säby, Dyre Funder, begging him to come instantly to Laesö and support the governor of the island, Runow Ruyter, in a most important and pressing affair.

Dyre Funder came willingly and speedily. The fat wolf-fish that were caught in the north of the island were a great dainty to him, and he ate them three times a day with pepper-corns and melted butter. He chatted good-humouredly with Jacob about Tübingen and its good beer, and the white wine that is so difficult to keep from going sour.

It was only on the following day that he found leisure to make inquiries concerning the girl, Kaina. Runow was somewhat taciturn and slow in his explanation, but the words flew readily from Jacob's tongue.

So Dyre Funder learned that Kaina had lived for more than three years under the roof of Klitgaard.

But since then——?

Aye, since then——!

Dyre Funder quite understood that she had wandered about in accordance with her own evil pleasure. So many the more would be the witnesses of her shame.

The trial was to take place on the following morning, and the bailiff wrote in chalk on the

doors of Klitgaard and ran to Vige Laem who must himself go through the country and summon the people to the assembly, even the workers at the salt-pans and the inhabitants of the cluster of huts that lay huddled together near the church.

The peasants lifted their heads, but not the spoons from their sour fish-soup—there would be good sport to-morrow!

The strange judge became the more eager the more he learned of Kaina, the pastor Glob was also to bear witness as to her Christianity, of which there certainly was not much to boast.

Dyre Funder listened carefully to all the testimony, and much that was new thus came to light. Runow was in the habit of stopping the peasants when their tongues began to wag, but the strange judge was gentle and gave them time to say all that they wished. Two old, stunted hags, with sharp tongues, spoke up willingly; aye, she ran after young men, old men, and even boys, and crept in impudent shamelessness into the very huts, the huzzy, each night into a new one—so that they had to protect their men-folk from her. Certainly that was a while ago. For since then—

For since then?

Runow rose from his seat of judgment, and let his eyes pass keenly and slowly over every face, and no one knew anything of the nights that had passed "since then." As he once more seated himself it seemed to him as if the whole

room were covered with green mould, and his fingers were paralyzed.

Dyre Funder asked whether any one suspected, knew, or guessed who had been her light of love at the time when the child was conceived.

A hissing murmur passed through the hall, a noise, but no words.

Once more Runow rose and asked, in a sharp voice and with smiling lips, whether they had not a suspicion—a mere suspicion.

It was old Poul Finken who summoned up his courage to speak.

If the just judge and the gracious lord really wished to know, it was the devil himself who was father to the child, he and no other.

But Pastor Glob, who was perspiring in a corner, plagued by many flies, demanded to be heard and sworn. He told of all the insults that the girl had heaped upon him, although he had vowed with great spiritual and physical warmth to fill her with simple, Christian faith. But, nevertheless, she was a blasphemer, with thick blood, and possessed by paganism. He had

shed tears upon the altar-cloth over the waywardness with which she had rejected grace.

Then Kaina was led in, tied only with a slender hempen cord that did her no hurt, and a heavy hail of angry questions rained down upon her.

For a long while she remained silent, until Vige Laem shook her good-naturedly by the arm, and then she began to cast side-glances and to nod when she was spoken to, or to shake her head, quite by hazard and without understanding.

She said that she knew neither her name nor her land. Once her eyes glanced towards Runow, but she immediately blinked as if they had encountered too strong a light. Runow watched her calmly, her thinness, the result of captivity, went to his heart. For the rest, so long as she was present in the hall, he felt himself secure. He knew his power over her yielding spirit, and although he saw that her head and arms trembled with pain he felt that he was safe.

She was asked about the child.

She caught at her breast; something sucked

and tugged at it as if little lips were seeking sustenance. Ah, how it hurt her as she became aware that milk was trickling from it!

The bailiff brought in the little trough; it was placed in front of Kaina and the cloth was removed.

"Dost thou acknowledge it? Was it flesh of thy flesh? Did it creep from thy lap?" She swayed backwards and forwards and sighed deeply at each question.

"Have these, thy hands, dealt out death to it?"

With a spring she reached the trough, pressed it to her, rocked it in her arms.

"Yes!"

She cried it aloud so that the hall rang with it.

But Dyre Funder held a fold of his mantle before his nose and shuddered before he continued:—

"Two conceived it—who shared thy lust?"

She rocked the child and did not at once answer.

"He slept upon my hair—every night he slept upon my hair!" her lips whispered, as if in a tender caress. She did not look at Runow, but

spoke only to the child. Her eyes shone and wandered restlessly over it. Then the gleam went out of them and she ceased to rock it.

For now she saw—

For now she saw what her arms held!

She stretched them out at full length in front of her and stepped backwards, her gaze fixed on the child, back through the crowd of witnesses who made way for her, backwards to the wall. She could not get farther away from the child—and yet could not let it go.

All eyes stared at her.

Runow also. Something like an iron ring was pressing on his brain and kept his head from bursting.

Without a word Jacob rose from his place, took the little trough from Kaina's hands and carried it out. Dyre Funder opened his mouth wide in amazement until Jacob returned.

"Dear friend and gracious lord judge, my nose, like a dainty maid, was near to fainting, and therefore I took the liberty!"

They all laughed.

But Jacob's eyes blinked ceaselessly as if under

strong emotion. The witnesses repeated in Kaina's presence their complaints and accusations. When she was interrogated, and believed from the tone of Dyre Funder's voice that he expected her to answer "yes," she nodded, otherwise she looked only at the door and from the door to Jacob.

So far they arrived on the first day.

And Dyre Funder ate with satisfied conscience, and in company with Runow and Jacob, fat wolf-fish, young moor-hens, and spiced leg of mutton. Laesö appeared to his palate an agreeable land, with sensible, expansive witnesses.

But when Runow next day was chained to his bed with toothache, with warm poultices on his cheek, and Dyre Funder remained alone whilst the pastor Glob gave his testimony against Kaina and questioned her, she kept a moody silence. She crouched together and let her arms hang, whether they poked or pushed her. Silently she brooded.

For the strange judge's benefit, the watchman had recently arrested two foreign glass-blowers who were accused of assault and other lewdness.

Runow had had them locked up in the dark loft at Klitgaard, where they sat and howled and stamped like wild horses from sheer boredom and wickedness, in the narrow darkness just over the chimney. Their breath whistled with fury.

He thought that such enlivening company might loosen the stubborn tongue of the girl—but he would not allow any love-making.

In his ardour he followed Vige Laem into the prison-cell, and helped him to measure the scoundrels' chains.

Then each of them was fastened to the wall in such a way that he could make two paces in the cell. Dyre Funder watched through the spy-hole to see the fun.

Both the glass-blowers sprang to the length of their chains and snatched at the girl, who pressed herself back against the wall. They tore the damp sleeping-skin from under her feet so that she fell, and they caught hold of her dress. But Dyre Funder laughed and they let her go again. She speedily became docile, and promised to answer everything, and before the night came the chains were shortened.

When Runow heard from Dyre Funder's lips how Kaina had been tamed, his toothache left him, and he rose to conduct the trial once more. The best thing would be to send the two fellows out of the country as quickly as possible. Each had an ear clipped off with a pair of sharp shears, and they were set upon a small, flat raft that would carry them whither it and the wind pleased, but not back again to Laesö.

After this Runow kept well and watchful during all the seven hearings, and Kaina answered obediently. When Dyre Funder asked her whether an evil spirit had fathered the child, she answered "yes." She was condemned to the tenfold death. But as she possessed only one life, Dyre Funder pondered sagely and decided, with Runow, that her limbs should be broken and she herself burned.

The affair had come almost too rapidly to an end; Dyre Funder would gladly have remained for some weeks upon the island with its appetizing wolf-fish, but the Säby court of justice could no longer dispense with its worthy judge. However, he promised to be present at the girl's exe-

cution; he would not miss that pleasant spectacle after the fatigues of the trial.

Before he departed Kaina was chained with heavy fetters on wrists and ankles, and Vige Laem received strict orders on no condition to loosen them until the sentence should be carried out.

The boat that conveyed Dyre Funder to the mainland also had on board two trustworthy men who were to bear the sealed sentence to the high court of the chapter-house of Viborg. In all probability it would have to be forwarded thence to the higher court, and this would occupy some time.

Winter came suddenly with ice and snow. The sea was covered with blocks of ice. The ground was like roughened hide, the hollows became sheets of glass.

Every one was shy of touching iron, for it burned like fire to the hand. Those who had fuel made themselves comfortable on the hearth, the others crept under wool and skins and kept themselves warm with their own sweat. Between Laesö and the mainland the ice screwed and squeezed itself, cracking and grinding. There was no fish to be caught.

The watch was now superfluous.

Kaina lay in the prison. The raw marks on her wrists and ankles were red-hot with the cold. Icy snow drifted into her eyes, burning them like salt—the whirlwind tore through every spy-hole. The floor was a morass of filthy pools that shone like envious eyes in the daytime, and in the night froze to ice.

Each morning Vige Laem sent her a copper brazier of coals. Over it she thawed her frozen hands and feet so that the wounds smarted and their crusts fell off.

The food that he gave her tasted of one thing and smelled of another; she touched it with repugnance, but when she had fasted for two days she dug her fingers into it and devoured it all to the last morsel. Then it lay like smouldering peat in her stomach.

Sometimes Jacob came. First she would hear his shrill, disagreeable laugh as he talked to Vige Laem of unchaste things, mentioning her name. He brought her freshly smoked mutton and a can of warm milk wrapped in a cat-skin, but she threw it on the ground—from him she would take nothing. She distrusted the very breath of his mouth.

Dearly, with the gold that he loved more than his own soul, with shrill laugh and with unclean speech, Jacob purchased the right to enter the cell. And Vige Laem thought his own thoughts.

Once Jacob bargained with him that he might loosen the fetters for a while. Aye, Vige Laem

agreed, and agreed also to remain away and leave them in peace for a whole night. They might enjoy themselves as they pleased.

To show his good-will he brought in a well-filled hay pillow, laid it on the skin couch, and set two braziers at the head and foot of it.

But it was for a very different reason that Jacob wished to see the fetters loosened.

Deaf to his whispers, Kaina rolled herself together in a corner. He stood before her hesitating—and in his abstraction he stroked her face with his fingers.

Suddenly she sprang up, seized them, and held them fast. She recognized the two deft, soft hands; they smelled of crushed willow-twigs. They it was that had brought her food every evening under the bell.

The coals filled the cell with yellow smoke, it was dark, and they knew not what to say to each other. Jacob warmed a can of water over the fire, washed her wounds, poured grey salve into them and bound them up with linen. He combed her poor hair, and gave her a clean chemise and

a new dress in place of that which the glass-blowers had torn.

She let him tend and care for her.

Then she rested on the fresh hay-pillow and Jacob talked to her. But he said nothing of his own beating heart, nothing of the sick longing that had filled him ever since the moment when he had first seen her. Runow was still lord of her will—and he only brought her a message from Runow.

In Runow's name he talked to her kindly, in Runow's name he betrayed Brigitte and swore that never again should she set foot in Klitgaard. But for her life's sake Kaina must hold herself in readiness so soon as an answer and a ship should come from Holland and the ice break.

She pointed with her finger—was it over the sea? She would not cross the sea—only not cross the sea!—but rather meet death willingly. Her heart was so weary, weary unto death, so that she could no longer feel with her finger where it was. And she knew that Brigitte would come back; of course she would come back.

Then she fell asleep—and in sleep she

stretched out her two arms and laid them about Jacob's neck, and his lips rested upon hers. But she murmured Runow's name, and he freed himself from her embrace and crept away.

The skipper was at Klitgaard with greeting and a letter from Groener Pleyelt. From the letter hung a seal.

"The ship, laden with Delft tiles, is sailing northwards. The skipper is more serviceable than faithful—he can be bought with gold. Only send the girl to me. What bread I have shall be divided into two portions and she shall share my hunger.

"Yet I would counsel thee, Runow, not to link thy life to any woman's. Rather take the punishment of thy sin and save thy soul whilst there is yet time.

"Know that thou hast so poisoned Cornelia's blood, the purest of the pure, that she is not ashamed to speak her unchaste lust and to call upon thy name, instead of kneeling before Him upon the Cross. Neither my prayers nor my pain can banish the malady from her body.

"It is empty here. All is empty around me

and in my heart. The flowers died, they froze one winter-night—as my joy froze one summer night when Cornelia left the city.

"But thou art called judge over men's lives—to the damnation of their souls and thine own! I am old—and I cry, Woe unto thee, Runow!"

The skipper's mouth went like a mill-wheel. It was to be expected, he said, that before many years had passed Groener Pleyelt would wander with beggar's sack and beggar's staff from door to door, if he were not in the mad-house. All his goods he gave away, and the costly herbs of the garden were left to wilter and to freeze. He himself preferred to lie on the threshold of the church with seven crippled beggars, weeping and beating his breast. Or he gathered to him the maidens of the town, like a swarm of doves about a sieve of corn, and bellowed into their ears concerning sin and the temptations of the blood until the fear for their little white souls sent them away. One was forced to pity him, for his beautiful daughter was possessed, and the heaviest penance could not suffice to free her.

Runow wrinkled his forehead in doubt. But

come what might—Kaina must go to Groener in Utrecht, and even if she, too, must lie before the church door. If she would not go willingly, then she must be taken by force.

Runow made the skipper swear silence, and they began to bargain.

Thamis of Rotterdam, such was the skipper's name, would lie at anchor six days under the island, but not an hour longer.

The three crabbed merchants in Elsinore who were awaiting the ship's cargo, were not easy to deceive; should they learn the true reason of the delay he would lose their confidence and a great part of his profits.

On that account he must take care of his skin in advance, and demand high payment for the undertaking.

They came to an agreement.

But from the moment when Thamis of Rotterdam anchored his schooner west of the island Kaina was watched again. Two men or two women walked noisily, day and night, about the prison. They made beer over peat-fires in a sand-hole and kept Vige Laem awake with it.

No one was the least in doubt as to the meaning of Thamis' presence.

He strutted about the island in a pair of high, shining riding-boots, a jerkin of chequered leather, and a turned-down collar round his broad neck. He jested with every one he met, and the women were crazy after him. It was with difficulty that he kept himself from boasting.

A plan was laid between him and the governor; he was to make friends with Vige Laem, in order, by favourable opportunity, to entice him away from his duty.

He carried out this plan by hanging about under the prison walls with Vige Laem, surrounded by a flock of idle island folk.

He boasted to them all of what he had seen in the warm seas of the south, where birds and fish and swollen corpses from the bottom of the sea burned, so that smoke and red flames licked the keel of the ship. And on shore it was still worse. The wild huzzies of the African coast ate men's fingers like the roes of fish. And their kisses burned hotter than the many-coloured

jelly-fish on the surface of the water that are nothing but burning slime. He had lost three fingers of his left hand. But if, by the help of the Most High and a good wind, he should return once more to Holland, it would not be long before he again sailed southwards, even if they should devour all the fingers of his right hand, too.

The ignorant women swallowed his words with delight, looked at their fingers and his crippled hand, and laid down their infants in the heather.

Thamis went guilelessly to Klitgaard and announced that the week had now passed, and that he must sail if he did not wish to be set in the stocks by the angry merchants. Runow bargained with him for six days more, and Thamis' demands increased.

It was probably wiser to remain quietly on board his ship, and avoid intercourse with the island folk.

And he did so; but he leaned over the side of the ship and played upon a flute, and all the women came running to the strand. The sweet

music delighted their ears. They began suddenly to make their nets with ardour, to collect stones, and make tar for the boats.

But the watch over Kaina was not relaxed.

The next time Thamis screwed the price up five-fold, for now he might as well throw the beautiful Delft ware overboard to the fishes—it was too late for the June market in Elsinore, according to the contract.

For such a price five ships without other commission or cargo could have been obtained from Holland.

That might be, said Thamis, but one did not care to lend one's self to secrecy—and his, at any rate, was not cheap.

Towards evening he was to come and learn the decision of the judge. And he slouched along to his friend Vige Laem. The latter was in the act of cleaning out the prison, as it was his habit to do once a year, but Thamis might enter if his nose were not too sensitive. He had not yet seen the girl for whom so much was at stake. When he had occasionally peeped in she had always lain with her face hidden in a

forest of black locks that surrounded her like coal-smoke.

Would she instantly get up and bid good-day to Master Thamis of Rotterdam? She stood up, with both hands before her face. Thamis pulled them away and examined the girl with half-shut eyes, until she was uneasy down to the soles of her feet. He took her softly around the neck with the two remaining fingers of his left hand, and it seemed to her as if ants were creeping under her skin.

Vige Laem thrust his pitchfork into the firm crust that loosened itself with a fearful stench. Not for a barrel of fat Flemish herrings would he have anything to do with this yellow monster; she was spiteful, and scratched with fingers and toes worse than the woman in the neighbouring hut when one came too near her! And yellow into the bargain—as if she had been soaked in oil and smoked in the chimney.

See, see—the little thing, the smooth monkey! Thamis gently separated her jaws; her mouth was red right down to the gullet. Well, he would soon have her on board. But now Vige

Laem had finished his work, and might permit himself a game of dice.

But on the same evening Thamis presented himself at Klitgaard and was far more pliable than before.

He promised to remain lying off the island until the gracious lord could collect the wretched money. As now, in any case, his cargo was lost there was not so much haste to return to Holland. According to his promise, he would hold himself in readiness to sail night or day. He would stake his life on it that the girl should be carried safely on board and there watched over and shielded like his own daughter.

Thus a fresh respite was obtained. Whilst the sentence was not yet made known, and whilst Brigitte was not at Klitgaard there was still time.

But Runow had not the money that Thamis demanded. He could not dig it out of the earth, neither could he cut it out of his flesh—he did not believe in the fable of selling his soul to the devil or he would long since have forfeited it.

His conscience ate into his soul like a loathsome moth of which he longed to be free. But he could as easily rid himself of the needs of his body as of his thoughts.

When he was alone he cursed his cowardice, yet that cowardice was not the result of physical weakness, but of an unsound mind. For care and terror were, in reality, no worse than evil dreams. If one but trod straight forward and slept on the right side one need fear neither dreams nor terror.

Jacob could help, Jacob must help. He found him occupied in healing a cut arm. His fingers carefully felt in the deep, bleeding wound to find the severed tendons and tie them together. Runow was forced to shut his eyes and lean against the door-post. For the moment Jacob had no time to spare; the arm must first be bound up.

Softly and soothingly—in tender words like those with which Runow had hunted Kaina out on the night when she bore her child—Jacob answered that he would rather give his living heart to be devoured by swine than sacrifice the

little that he had earned in many years of sweating.

But Runow did not cease to plead. There were soon no words that he had not dragged out and whispered and cooed to Jacob. Disgust seized him for his own speech and its impotence, but still he sought other words, and still others. He must find the one that would persuade Jacob.

Could he not find it—

The day and hour of Kaina's execution were now written in chalk on the barn-door. There was a crowd before it, for every one wanted to see the white marks—very few could understand them.

The pyre should be elegantly decorated with red heather and green twigs, fine as if with flowered upholstery!

And God grant that the sun might shine that day, and that the rain might not fall!

Joyous expectation reigned everywhere, as before Whitsuntide and St. John's Eve.

The highest court of the kingdom had supported the verdict of Dyre Funder and the judge of the island. The decision was made known to both, but Dyre Funder requested a postponement of twelve days, as he was at present prevented from coming, but would greatly like to see the sentence carried out.

In addition, the flesh of the wolf-fish was particularly good in early summer.

Runow's forehead was as empty of thoughts as a stone is of corn. He felt a soft, secret buzzing in his head. He listened to see whether it might not be the saving counsel—but he could not find it. He even spoke very softly at this time and could bear no noise. He turned with incontrollable fury upon every one who looked at him.

Silence reigned at Klitgaard as if a corpse lay in every room.

The brothers spoke together no more.

Runow had sent an urgent messenger to Brigitte, begging her to come at once if she were at Lünegaard. He was partly driven to it by terror, partly by dullness.

If only he might hear Brigitte's tickling laughter in every corner the horror would lose its power over him. If only she were with him he would take her hands, and the strength of her mind, her will and her love, would pass from her blood into his. Never more would he let her go.

Now that the day was fixed, fear seized him

lest Brigitte should not reach the island in time. She surely would not come with empty hands, surely not! Should she be leaving Lünegaard for a year and a day she would herself take charge of her money.

But, thereupon, he vowed that he would not touch a farthing, though she should bring with her the hundred-fold of what Thamis demanded. This he swore.

Jacob rowed alone in a boat out into the deep sea. Temptation had assailed him.

He understood Kaina's deadly terror, he knew how Runow suffered.

But Thamis did nothing but stroll about the prison cell and play to Kaina on the flute.

She should be broken and burned sooner than fall a victim to his lust.

This was Jacob's melancholy decision.

He let his oars drop. It was deep out here and there was no bottom to be seen. Whatever might be buried here would be hidden from all, including himself.

He let the gold glide through his fingers before the deep swallowed it.

With it he might purchase her life—with it he might purchase her body for Thamis of Rotterdam.

He leaned over the side of the boat, no ground could be seen at all, only bluish-black rippling water.

And then he turned homewards.

His gold was dear to him as the light of his eyes.

But in the Seven-Isles trunk it was not safe from Runow.

* * * * * * * *

The pyre was set up with greater care than the bridal-bed of the Laesö peasants. Each one contributed his mite, and was happy in thereby assuring himself in an easy manner from lightning and pestilence the whole year round.

They came from all quarters as to the Kirmess. Damp wood was surrounded with dry, dried stumps with green branches. Turf was dug out in circles from under the heather, and twigs stuffed into all the spaces so that there might be equal quantities of flames and smoke,

that the spectacle might be a prolonged and a joyous one.

The executioner's boys stamped out in the centre a hole for the stake. It was only to be erected at dawn.

But the young huzzies who still slept alone and called themselves virgins, ran to the wood and sought out a tree that had been felled by the storm and that seemed to them sufficiently slender to form the stake.

They hoisted it onto their shoulders, and altogether, side by side, they carried it to Klitgaard and laid it across the stream, where it was cleared of bark and branches. Then, forming a long chain, they ran to collect wild rosemary and broom, grass, and heathery dune-straw and house-leek, to wind about the pole as if it were a May-tree.

Every maid tore out a tress of her hair and wound it in with the rest, that lust might not burn her nor men run after her by night.

On the tip were bound three cows' tails to wave like white pennants in the breeze.

This was in accordance with ancient island rite.

Kaina would be bound to the stake below the breast, not so fast but that head and limbs might defend themselves and struggle against the flames.

The pyre was erected in front of the windows of the hall of justice, the bailiff declared it to be suitable, the girls again lifted it on to their shoulders and carried it to the foot of the scaffold-mount.

The morning broke, and Runow had slept. But in his dreams the deed had been accomplished not once, but seventy times over.

He awoke with a taste of blood on his tongue, and scars upon his hands. He had to lean against the bed-post to meet the day and to realize that it had really come and that he was not dreaming.

Blood, blood—and the taste of it upon his tongue!

Now he remembered everything.

Cowardice and will together governed him, so that in his dreams he had bitten his tongue that it might keep silence, his hands that they might be still and not grasp at Kaina to tear her from the pyre.

Unconsciously he began to recite the sentence from beginning to end, in a loud voice, as if he were standing before all the people.

His lips must read it and not Dyre Funder's.

But it was early morning, a still, clear morning, and outside in the courtyard the cock was crowing. Nothing was as yet accomplished, there was still time, the miracle might still happen.

Runow glanced curiously at his hands. So that was how they looked—the hands that had set name and seal under the sentence, soft and round.

Under his gaze they clenched themselves as if they knew their guilt. There were the bloody wounds—he wanted to wash them off, but then he remembered the day when Kaina had stood at the pump and poured water over her right hand. He rubbed them with coarse linen and held them in the sun and tried to force them to be still, but they continued to tremble.

It seemed as if they were only awaiting an occasion to give him the slip—but the tendons were surely strong enough to hold them back! A furious hatred filled him for the cowardly hands. He would have liked to trample upon them; and that reminded him of the pain he had felt when the letter burned to ashes in his palm.

He measured the height of the sun. When it had traversed the short curve from Tarben's empty hut to the roof of Klitgaard, all living things must be silent—the leaves on the trees, the flight of the wind—whilst the executioner broke her tender limbs and bound her on the pyre, whilst the flames ran through the wiry heather and licked the soles of her feet, ran up her breast to her brown cheeks; whilst her cry rang over the whole island and filled the air together with countless sparks of fire.

And if all the winds of the earth should blow upon the island her ashes would never be scattered, her cry would never be silenced.

No, no—nothing had happened yet, there was still time! His brain was tormented, plan after plan formed itself—one pressing upon the other.

Old Ture summoned him to table, Dyre Funder had come. But Runow dressed himself first in his holiday clothes. The clothes offered him a welcome shelter, a covering for the terror of his body—but his face was still bare and his hands; uncovered before the eyes of all.

No one must notice his uneasiness.

He sat down and watched how Dyre Funder's jaws crunched his food. He himself chewed and swallowed and talked until he at last discovered that he had not yet taken a single bite into his mouth.

Then he ate, and the food tasted good.

Afterwards, Dyre Funder went to rest himself for a while, for it was a very hot day.

The time was passing, but it must not pass according to its own sweet will, it must stand still. Runow began to count the lost minutes, pulled the hand from the clock and broke it.

Time must stand still, the sun must stand still, as once in earlier days—over Gideon, over Gideon?

He grasped at empty air and crooked his fingers. Now he had time fast.

Then he heard an evil, creaking sound.

Ture was in the yard splitting wood, no doubt to be used for baking. He turned towards the other side. The dung-pit gleamed in the sun in front of the exuding elms like a beehive surrounded by its bees.

The executioner's youngsters ran past with a last load of purple heather.

But the noise that had struck harshly on his ears?

It was Jacob. He stood by the grindstone, sharpening the narrow knife that he used for his patients.

Runow looked side-ways at Jacob, Jacob at Runow. Then Runow went out, for now he knew what to do.

There was still time to buy Thamis.

He passed through the narrow chambers to the east turret where stood Jacob's chest. He tried to loosen the iron bands with a knife, but he found that an axe would be necessary. He lifted it wildly as if against one who defended himself.

The bands sprang, the nails fell out. He almost broke his fingers in opening the chest.

But at last it was open.

He pulled everything out, silk, feathers, lace, dagger-sheaths—but there was no silver and no gold, either.

Then he noticed that tears were running from

his eyes, he heard his lips murmur a paternoster —half-way through. He would have left the room—and ran against Jacob.

They looked each other in the face.

"Wouldst thou know where it is hidden—that which thou art so eagerly seeking?" asked Jacob.

"It is well guarded—I hid it under the bell beside the child thou hadst conceived with her!"

Runow started back. Jacob continued, "Under the bell, Runow—now thou knowest it. And only thou canst know whether it is safe there!"

Jacob was wise.

It suddenly seemed to Runow that he had forgotten how to read. Not a letter could he remember, and yet he must needs read the sentence. He took it up, but was tired and dull, and only wished to sleep.

Outside some one passed along the wall, now there were two. A light murmur arose. More and more came. Were all the inhabitants of the island surrounding Klitgaard to see him start for the place of justice?

Some one scratched at the door, meekly, uncertainly, as if with withered fingers. Arnlys'

daughter entered with Tarben's old father. They came to announce that the Dutch schooner had sailed that morning. The evening before Master Thamis of Rotterdam had quarrelled with Vige Laem and the others outside the prison, and had so shamelessly slandered the highest of the island that if he had had his deserts he must have been fastened to the ring which would be free at noon. But at dawn he had sailed, and was now out of sight.

Runow knew well that they were come to watch his face, and he stared so fiercely into Poul Finken's eyes that he was obliged to hang his head. In the door he lisped, insinuatingly, "Kaina starts grandly from the court, and with a great following!"

Runow clenched his hands that he might not falter. They turned their backs and went out without another word.

Ah, now! ah, now!—

The "poor sinner" bell was tolling from the loft of the Bürum chapel. The respite was at an end—at an end.

A fly buzzed about Runow's nose, it must die.

Life for life. What was its pitiful life in comparison with Kaina's? Ah, no, only not hers, only not hers! But the fly—it must die, at any rate. He struck with the palm of his hand against the beam and the fly disappeared in the sticky soot.

Why could not the people come in to see how he had killed the fly?

He threw himself down upon his face, bit into the planks of the floor, scratched in the black joints, prayed the earth to swallow him. No power should force him to the seat of justice. His tongue would rot away if it must read the sentence.

He ran about distractedly to find a rope, knotted it into twenty nooses, bound himself tightly to the bed-post and stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth.

Jacob came and called him out to his duty. The procession was formed and only waiting for him. Jacob took the handkerchief out of his mouth and loosened the noose from his neck.

Did he wish all the people to call him a coward?

Runow wept, with his arms about Jacob's neck.

Now he knew what he would do. He would read aloud the sentence before all the people so that it rang through the air, and then—Kaina should not stand alone upon the pyre.

Already he felt the flames pass from her hair to his, and felt them eating through his skull.

Only his fingers shook with fear.

For a little while he worked up his courage, then all fear had left him. He took the written sentence and, throwing his mantle over him despite the warmth of the day, went out.

The coach awaited him. Dyre Funder was stretched out in it with sleepy eyes. Runow glanced calmly over the many faces that were turned to him, took his place beside Jacob and gave an order to the driver.

His hands rested peacefully on his knees, he was glad to see the sky so blue.

The coach rolled away from Klitgaard and joined the cart that stood before the prison.

The procession wound slowly along the sandy road to the hill of execution, a low, desolate rise

in the neighbourhood of the Hornfisher huts and the great salt-pans.

Next to them hobbled Germund and Idel, hand-in-hand, and they wept all the way. Behind them, close to the cart, danced the children of Arnlys. Their tongues did not rest. They threw rotten fish at Kaina. The smallest was carefully carrying a closed pitcher.

She pressed close to Kaina and asked, maliciously:

"Art thou thirsty?—then drink from our sweet mother's mug!"

Kaina did not move. Her hands were bound fast on her back, but otherwise she wore no fetters.

Then the child tore the cover from the jug, intending to throw its contents into her face, but old Idel struck it and the red mass poured over the child herself, so that she broke out into a howl.

It was full of ants.

The fat women opened their chemises at the neck, but their heads were so covered up that only teeth and noses were visible.

Beggars and cripples crept along with the rest, pensive and joyous—for afterwards there would be hot fish in every hut.

The short distance appeared long in the intense heat.

By the hill of execution Arnlys' children joined hands—except the youngest, who still howled and shook herself. The crowd looked on and formed a chain.

In a three-fold circle they danced around the pyre and the executioner, the cart and the coach. It was impossible to distinguish a separate note from their unanimous yells. The executioner's youngster played on his clarionet.

A suckling bit its mother in the breast so that she screamed out. The air was perfectly still, not a breeze was blowing. The three white cows' tails hung limply on the stake.

Kaina looked down at her lap.

Now and then a shudder ran through her body, and she moaned softly. The executioner unfastened her hands. There was silence all around, a moment of breathless silence.

The bleating of a sheep in the distance sounded like a loud noise.

Now Kaina raised her eyes for the first time, and met those of Runow. It was as if she awoke from heavy stupefaction to bewildering happiness. It was as if Runow took her into his arms and shielded her from the angry, evil people.

With a laugh as clear as sunlight she looked across their ranks. She looked at her nails that were long as claws. She combed her hair with her fingers, but it curled about her head in stiff black ringlets, blacker than pitch.

Suddenly she became ashamed of the prison dirt and drew her bare legs under her. And she sat there rocking the upper part of her body to and fro and smiling. Once more her eyes had met those of Runow.

He hesitated, half intoxicated with sweet and distant memories. Thick mists seemed to rise within him and to surge about him, and fine, pricking rain to fall inside his brain.

The executioner toyed impatiently with his tools.

Runow rose. He staggered as if shaken by a violent shuddering—and then stood upright.

He turned his eyes away from Kaina, looked down at the paper and read. His clear, soft voice could be heard far away. The paper shook, for his hands trembled.

Kaina followed him, murmuring each word after him as he read. The smile died slowly on her lips.

At last!

The clarionet blared again, and the crowd hurrahed. The executioner turned to Kaina, covering her with his back.

At that instant Runow recollected how damnably it had hurt when Brigitte pressed the burning paper into his hand.

Kaina screamed for the first time.

Runow did not move from the spot where he was seated, and he did not look up until all was at an end.

During this time Jacob had distracted himself by boring his sharp knife through his hand.

Runow had tamed his hands, tamed them by biting his fingers when they would not obey him. They no longer trembled, but were like intelligent, well-trained animals, perfectly submissive to his will. He lifted them towards the sun, let them dance upon the surface of the table, clenched them tightly, stroked them carefully—they no longer trembled.

But if he sat a while in the hall of justice and forgot to pay attention to his thought and will, his hands would slip from him so helplessly that the tendons had no power to command them again, try as he would. His whole body was bathed in sweat as if every pore had burst. It seemed to him in his terror that the life-blood, fearful of his misery, was trickling from his veins, and that he must bleed to death.

If some one did not quickly pass him a drink he would fall together, and lie with snapping jaws, like a dog in a fit. Jacob would then be

summoned and would pour jugs of cold water over him until he once more became calm.

He had tamed his hands, but his eyes would not let themselves be controlled.

In that hour of noon, when the flames of Kaina's pyre rose high into the sunshine his eyes had absorbed so much glaring light that they were blinded as if by lightning. On the following morning he had noticed that they blinked and shifted about like the sails of a wind-mill, and could not bear the light of day, nor the sun, nor the gaze of a human being.

He tried in vain to fix them upon his mirror, they still glanced away and aside. In vain he opened them wide, they contracted morbidly.

Jacob gave him ointment for the eyelids, but he remained equally shy of the sun and of men's glances. Then Jacob had to cut him a green cardboard shade which he wore ever after.

Yet neither shade nor smarting ointment, nor even the darkness of the night, could banish the faces that haunted him.

And although he rubbed his nostrils with

onions and with perfumed water he could not rid them of the stench of burning.

A little later he went and complained to Jacob that his ears pained him like hollow teeth. The air sang in them as if in a mill, there was also a harsh noise like that of a knife upon a grindstone.

Kaina's five screams of agony sounded in them ceaselessly.

Jacob warmed oil and poured it into his ears so that he sprang about in pain. Then they were stopped with cotton-wool that no sound of the air might enter them.

Soon he was demanding, angrily, that every one should shout aloud so that he might hear their voices.

If he believed himself unobserved he slunk over from Klitgaard to the ruins of the church. The bell drew him.

But his own restless shadow followed him. He feared it, he heard its footsteps. He hunted it away, stoned it, covered it with sand-grass, enticed it far out into the marsh—in vain, in

vain; it clung to him, as the tongue cleaves to the gullet.

He would approach the bell until he could hear the fine trickling of the sand under it. He longed to touch with his hands the cold, sounding metal. But he dared not go close to it.

Round about the bell he went so often and so long that there was a circle in the sand where he had trodden.

Words would close his throat like thirst—he had to do violence to his voice to prevent it from whispering what filled his thoughts. He had vowed to himself that the inhabitants of the island should atone bitterly for Kaina's death. Their hands, their will, had led her to the pyre, and not his. Especially Arnlys' children should atone, all five of them. It was they who had led the dance around the mound of execution.

Thus it happened that he one day encountered the little girl with a stick of lead in her hands. He accused her of having stolen it from the ruins of the church. But she denied it, and her four brothers with her. In spite of this he had their ears cut with the shears, like sheep, the little

girl's right ear was cut off entirely. Thenceforth they would go about branded as thieves, the mark could never be washed out.

He was seized with a sudden horror of water; he could not take it into his mouth without thinking of the pond and the child in the shoal of carp. Yet he was always plagued with thirst since the smoke of Kaina's pyre had entered his throat. The sweet, warm milk of the cows tasted so good that more than once he drew it himself from their full udders. But when, after a night's dream, he remembered what he had half forgotten, that the ashes of Kaina's dainty body were strewed over every field and meadow, over dune and heather —after that he touched neither the milk nor the flesh of any animal of the island.

Only the fish which were caught in deep water, by a west wind, and far from the shore, formed the scanty nourishment of his body.

A boat laden with trunks filled with mantles, linen, furs, cushions and silver, arrived in advance with the news that Brigitte would soon be there with a troop of kinsfolk.

All the rooms were prepared.

Every day fresh meat was hung on the hooks, fresh fish laid in pickle, and dough rolled out for rich tarts.

On the roof of Klitgaard stood a keen-sighted man, protected from the sun, whose only duty was to watch for the boats. Runow himself stood there by the hour gazing from under his shade far out into the distance.

On the shore stood three carriages with horses harnessed to them, and these were changed so soon as they grew tired of standing. The bodies of the carriages, woven of supple, peeled twigs, were covered with white ox-skins. But the carriage which should convey the bride to Klitgaard

was lined entirely with bags of eiderdown sewn together.

If Brigitte had come the first time alone and unexpected, this time the whole island should receive her.

And she came.

With her were so many von Lindenows that the low-ceiled rooms of Klitgaard could not contain their laughter, that rang far out through the walls. The hall of justice had to be used. In it the pastor Glob united Brigitte and Runow and exhorted them to be fruitful, laying before them also other virtues pleasing to God and man.

The hall grew close from the warmth of the sun and of the smoking meats. The guests gathered together in twos and fours, each one prattling of his possessions.

Brigitte's earlier marriage-feast was much discussed, and not softly.

Runow and Brigitte sat side by side, both of them silent. She held her head high. Her long eyes shone. Every nerve was strung to its full pitch.

She sat there as if eternally silent, and was only

conscious of the pressure of Runow's knee against hers through the velvet of her robe. She held her arms crossed upon her breast to subdue its joyful heaving and to hide it from the eyes of men.

Runow knew nothing of it.

At the window stood a little water-trough filled with piled-up aniseed-rolls. That was all that he saw.

The guests had opened the trunks of documents at the upper end of the hall. Old marriage-papers, abstracts from the law-books, summonses and what-not, were spread out over the table. Each had taken possession of a document, followed the writing with his finger, and spelled it out. As the trial-records were also produced every one wished to know what sentences had been dealt out, during the last year of grace, upon the flat lands of Laesö.

Mathias Lindenow, Brigitte's uncle, who sat next to her, seized the portfolio. In a rough, vulgar voice he read, with difficulty, Dyre Funder's seven hearings of the maid Kaina. Brigitte grew impatient. She no longer dreamed

now, but followed the lines with her finger. The sentence was written in Latin letters. Runow was obliged to read it.

A little later he got up and went out, not noticing Brigitte, who followed him. In the brew-house a peacock had been so hastily withdrawn from the fire that fat and meat fell into the ashes, and a burning smell arose. The flames shot upwards.

Runow seized the water-jug and put out the fire at one throw. For a long time he stood drawing in the damp, white steam that mounted from the ashes, then he ordered the servants to light another fire under the peacock immediately.

They did as he directed.

When Runow found himself, later on, alone in the bed-chamber with Brigitte, he fancied, in his sick imagination, that he saw sulphur-smoke stream from her mouth and blue flames under her skin, and her breasts seemed to him like the brown scars of wounds.

And now she was Kaina. Her feet danced and sprang on the glowing peat. From her shattered arms blood dropped on to his hands. He thought that he was embracing her before the eyes of all.

But she screamed in his embrace—and it was not her voice.

Brigitte freed herself from his arms, she feared for her life. His consciousness returned slowly, and he glanced askance at her from under his shade. White and large she lay there, her hair spread out for his cheek to rest on.

He clutched at it, hid his face in it, and fell asleep at once.

Brigitte watched.

One thing she knew; had her life received new life at that moment she would extinguish it with her own hands.

Runow gasped for air. The red silk cushion that some one or other had sewed for his dreams lay half under his jaws.

She drew it carefully away, and in doing so tore the fragile stuff in two so that Kaina's luxuriant black hair fell over his face and neck.

And then Brigitte understood much.

She rose from the couch, shivering with cold down to her heels. The singing in her blood had grown dumb.

In the hall of justice lay three drunken guests. The wine from overturned jugs soaked their clothes and made their hair and beards sticky. In their sleep they cried aloud and laughed.

Brigitte sought until she found the record of the trial, and she read it through to the end. Then she went to Jacob and sat down upon the edge of his bed. From him she heard all.

But Brigitte did not weep, and showed no sorrow. At last Jacob asked her, hesitatingly,

whether she meant to leave Runow now that she knew.

She answered, "Not even if he should drive me away!"

When she returned to their chamber Runow was no longer there.

* * * * * * * *

He lay under the great bell, writhing in unreasoning terror. If his head touched the sounding metal the walls of the bell began to murmur; Kaina's screams of agony seemed to dwell within it. Wherever he stretched out his hands they touched the body of his own child.

But he dared not escape, for here, and here only, could he find peace from inquisitive eyes—peace from Brigitte's greedy lips.

As he lay, there came to him the memory of his father and Hilleborg. Trembling, he crouched closer together.

"Our Father—Our Father!" He could get no further.

The children of Arnlys stood round about the bell. With their broad nails they scratched on the metal. It seemed to him that he could hear

the executioner—as at that noontide hour—toying impatiently with his instruments.

Softly the children pressed the bell deeper and deeper into the loose sand. Their bodies covered the opening so that no light could enter. They heard a scratching sound from within, they scratched again, they heard a cry and they cried back, laughing to one another:

"Now we will smoke the fox out!"

They pushed a bundle of heather under the opening, set it on fire, and pressed the bell farther into the sand.

Fine smoke-wreaths curled about it, the metal became hot to the touch.

But the air was warm and pleasant and the sun rose soon after.

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